# THE Public Interest

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## INEQUALITY, INCOME, AND OPPORTUNITY

**How Much More Equality Can We Afford?** *Edgar K. Browning*

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# Crime and punishment in England

JAMES Q. WILSON

However much we Americans may deplore the apparent political and economic decay of England, there persists among nearly all of us the admiring view that at least with respect to criminal justice, the English know how to do things properly. The images about British justice with which we have been supplied by countless reporters and storytellers remain unsullied and intact—the quiet, competent, incorruptible bobby; the stern but fair judge; the quick and certain punishment for wrongdoers; the respect and deference shown by all ranks of the English population toward unarmed constables; the safety and security of the meanest streets of London. To be sure, we are aware of some incidents of terrorist violence and an occasional football riot, but these are isolated and modest exceptions to the normal state of affairs.

This view of English crime and justice follows naturally upon a more general perception of British society widely taught and believed in the United States. There is thought to be in Britain a broad consensus in moral and legal matters—no competing value

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systems either generate crime or stimulate disrespect for the law. To these common habits of mind is joined a pragmatic disposition to devise rational and useful schemes for insuring both private rights and public safety—careful, formal trials for anybody accused of a crime, and prompt and severe sentences for anybody convicted of one. What we perceive, in short, is a legal system codified by Blackstone and supported by a sentencing policy devised by Bentham, all operating in a society described by Bagehot.

It would make for a fine literary effect if I could show at this point that the very opposite of these suppositions is, in fact, the case. Unfortunately, however, the reality of British justice, while quite different than is popularly imagined, is by no means the exact reverse of its image. The current state of criminal justice in England and Wales is enormously complex—in part because it is almost as diverse and lacking in central direction as its American counterpart; in part because it is the object of a strenuous debate over its purposes and practices; and in part because it is struggling, inadequately, to cope with a level of crime undreamt of as recently as 20 years ago. What can be said, I believe, is that if the economic crisis of the country were not uppermost in the minds of everyone, the problem of crime might well be; by the same token, if the government were in a position to increase expenditures on anything (which it very nearly is not), it might arguably give highest priority to the expansion and improvement of the police and the prisons.

It is clear that the current economic and political crisis powerfully affects the prospects for any bold action to deal with crime. What is not clear is whether that crisis—or rather the change in society and popular attitudes that have contributed to that crisis—has itself been a cause of the steep increase in crime that has occurred in recent years. It is clear that the political economy of England has come very near to collapse; whether the civic virtue of its people is in an equally perilous state—and, if so, whether from the same causes—is not at all clear.

What can be said is this: England and Wales are in the grip of their most steeply rising crime rate of this century. This crime wave has stretched the police service and the capacity of the prison system almost to the breaking point. Accompanying (and perhaps contributing to) the increase in crime have been changes in the criminal justice system that have substantially lessened the probability that any given offender will be penalized or separated from the rest of society—and this is especially true of young offenders. While certain cases are still dealt with swiftly, this is generally true only for

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less important ones or (not necessarily the same thing) ones in which the likely penalty is trivial. The congestion and delay in the disposition of serious cases has increased dramatically. Finally, there are signs of what I would call, at the obvious risk of some trans-Atlantic ill will, the "Americanization" of English criminal justice—by which I mean that well-intentioned officials and advisers in Her Majesty's government seem to have learned little from the mistakes made by their counterparts in the United States. There is scarcely a single ill-advised recommendation of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice that the British Home Office and its various advisory councils do not seem determined to repeat.

## Crime and its "causes"

It is widely believed that in the United States the crime rate is vastly—incomparably—larger than it is in England. Indeed, even if the comparison is restricted to the largest cities, the differences are supposedly enormous—London is claimed to have only a small fraction of the crime reported in New York. In fact, comparing all "serious" offenses ("indictable offenses" in England and "Index Crimes" in the United States), the United States has more, but not vastly more, than England. In 1973, there were 4,116 "Index" crimes per hundred thousand population reported to the police in the United States, and 2,760 "indictable offenses" per hundred thousand reported in England and Wales. The London Metropolitan Police reported 355,248 indictable offenses in 1973; the New York City Police Department reported 475,855 Index crimes the same year. The populations of the two cities are approximately the same.

"Index offenses" and "indictable offenses" are not exactly the same thing, and in consequence some may feel that any gross comparison of English and American crime figures is misleading. To a degree, that is true. But consider one or two specific crimes that are more or less commonly defined and commonly counted. There were 1,211 burglaries for every hundred thousand persons in the United States in 1973; there were 800 burglaries for every hundred thousand persons in England and Wales that year. A difference, to be sure, but not one so vast as is often supposed. And if one were to adjust the English and American figures for the differences in the availability of things worth stealing—color television sets, 10-speed bicycles, fancy camera gear—the burglary rate in England might well appear even higher than is reported.

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Another objection to the English/American comparison is that we are dealing only with *reported* offenses. We know, of course, that many offenses go unreported. It is possible that citizens report to the police a higher proportion of all burglaries in England than in the United States. Until the results of a British survey of criminal victimization are published, we will not know. But in the meantime, we can examine the rates for one crime—auto theft—which we know from surveys to be quite accurately reported in this country, and which we need not believe is any less completely reported in England. By my calculations, in England and Wales there were 2,056 motor vehicles stolen out of every one hundred thousand owned by households in 1973, a theft rate *twice as great* as in the United States, where there were just over a thousand stolen automobiles for every hundred thousand registered.

Nor are English thefts petty. F. H. McClintock and N. Howard Avison estimate that the average value of the property stolen per burglary or larceny in 1965 was in excess of $100 (now it is no doubt more) and they note that the greatest increases in theft have occurred in the category of high-loss crimes.

There *are* major differences in English and American crime rates, but primarily with respect to violent crimes. In 1973, 1680 murders were reported to the New York police but only 110 were reported to the London Metropolitan police. The total of 72,750 robberies reported in New York was nearly 27 times greater than the 2,680 robberies reported in London. Londoners may be only a little less dishonest than New Yorkers but they are vastly less violent.

England, including London, has experienced a great increase in the rate of reported serious (i.e., "indictable") offenses, but the increase in certain violent offenses, notably robbery, has been even greater. In 1955, there were only 823 robberies in all of England and Wales; in 1974, there were 8,666. This was a tenfold increase in number and, since the population did not grow much during this period, nearly a tenfold increase in rate. The rise has been even greater in London: There were 237 robberies reported there in 1955 but 3,151 in 1974, a thirteenfold increase. As a result, a larger percentage of all thefts are now accompanied by violence than was the case 10 or 20 years ago. In 1955, Colin Greenwood reports, less than three tenths of one per cent of all London thefts were robberies; by 1969, it was nearly one per cent, and it continues to grow. (In comparison, about 17 per cent of all New York thefts are robberies.)

The very great restrictions placed by English law on the private

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possession of firearms has apparently not impeded the increase in robbery. Blunt and sharp instruments—pick handles and knives, primarily—continue to be the favored weapon in armed robberies, accounting for over half. The number of robberies in which firearms—notably, shotguns—were used or carried has also increased greatly. Colin Greenwood concludes that there has been a steady increase in the use of violence in the commission of theft, that the number of robberies in which weapons were used has increased at least as fast as the number of robberies, and that there has been a sharp rise in the proportion of armed robberies in which the available weapon was a firearm. Despite legal restrictions, the steady shift from unarmed to armed robbery has proceeded apace—where there is a will, there is a way.

## Race and violence

Though the trends are ominous, London has a long way to go before violence there approximates violence in New York (or most other large American cities). What accounts for this great difference could occupy a speculative mind for years. I am aware of no scientific or systematic evidence that would shed light on it. One possibility will occur immediately to an American reader—the differences in the composition of the population, or to be blunt, race.

Certainly if you were to ask a taxi driver, hotel clerk, or news vendor in London, he would explain the increase in violent crime, especially robbery, by the presence of West Indians. The American term for robbery of the person on a street following a sudden attack —"mugging"—has caught the fancy of the English, and one finds frequent reference to it in the press, even though it lacks any precise legal definition. There is no doubt that muggings have increased in London—from 674 in 1968 to 1,544 in 1972, according to the police. The total is still, by American standards, ridiculously small—the prospect of four or five muggings a day in a city of eight million persons is not likely to inspire fear in the hearts of a Manhattanite. It is widely believed that these muggings are the work of black youths, but it is impossible to verify this. Though the Metropolitan Police (i.e., Scotland Yard) records the race of those whom it arrests, it will not divulge the data, nor will the Home Office, to which the police commissioner reports. A confidential study on race and crime was in fact made by the Statistical Unit of Scotland Yard, but the results are closely guarded.

Map displays of robberies and other violent crimes, however,

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show that these crimes are common in the heavily West Indian sections of London, such as Lambeth and Brixton, and on or near London Underground (i.e., subway) lines that serve those and similar areas. The authorities refuse to publish data on these matters, fearing that such facts would be exploited by anti-immigrant politicians and would unduly inflame popular prejudices. (Presumably the government would release the data if they would tend to soothe popular fears.)

Whatever may be the relationship between race and violent crime, immigrants cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, account for more than a small fraction of the total increase in crime in England. The rate at which indictable offenses are committed began rising in about 1930, quadrupling in the two decades before 1950. There was a pause just after World War II, with a few years of declining crime rates, and then an even more rapid surge began in 1955 that has continued, with a brief respite in 1972-1973, to the present. Crime has increased during the last two decades at a rate of about 10 per cent per year (about the same as the rate of increase in the United States). Though immigration to England was also increasing during this period (the number of persons living in Great Britain who were born overseas doubled between 1951 and 1971), the fraction of the total population born abroad has been quite small—3.2 per cent in 1951, 5.5 per cent in 1971. (The British census does not report the number of persons born in Britain of foreign or mixed parentage.)

Furthermore, most immigrants either are not "colored" (they are from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland), or are Asians (Indians and Pakistanis), whom every observer believes have lower than average crime rates. The proportion of persons living in England born in the West Indies is very small indeed—less than two per cent for Britain as a whole, only slightly more than two per cent for London. Finally, McClintock and Avison, studying criminal repeaters, found that well over 80 per cent of the known recidivists were born in England or Wales.

## Causes or conjectures?

What, then, can account for the great increase in English crime rates? There is no agreed-upon answer to that question, nor is there likely to be one. It is instructive for Americans to contemplate the problem, however, because the increase in English crime, in many ways so similar to the increase in the United States, cannot be ex-

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plained by the various "causes" regularly advanced in this country. Race, as we have seen, may explain some of the increase in violent crime, but it cannot explain much of the increase in crime generally. Nor can the increased youthfulness of the population account for much of the change. The number of boys under the age of 17 increased between 1961 and 1971 by eight per cent in Britain and nine per cent in the United States—a contribution to the rising crime rate, no doubt, but scarcely the decisive one. In England as in the United States, it is not simply or even primarily the growth in the *numbers* of young persons but rather the increased rate of crime *among* young persons that has caused crime rates to rise. Put in technical terms, the age-specific crime rate has increased, most notably among the younger age groups. For example, in 1951 only 1,164 out of every 100,000 males between the ages of 17 and 21 were convicted of an indictable offense in England and Wales. By 1973, that had quintupled: Now 5,522 out of every 100,000 males in that age group were found guilty. (The conviction rate for persons over thirty increased only slightly.)

Trying to explain the increased criminality of the young in England is as frustrating as trying to explain it in the United States. Narcotics addiction, which may explain some part of American crime rates, cannot explain more than a tiny fraction in England, where there are very few addicts (though the few that exist are quite likely to have criminal records, despite the availability of heroin from government clinics). Nor can the rising crime rate in England be accounted for by rising unemployment, increased income inequality, or deepening poverty. In 1961, the unemployment rate in Great Britain was 1.4 per cent; in 1973, it was 2.7 per cent. During the years in which crime was rising the fastest, unemployment was virtually nonexistent; the two recent years (1971 and 1972) in which unemployment exceeded three per cent were followed by two years in which, for the only time in the last two decades, the crime rate actually went down.

So also with income inequality. The government reports there has been a steady decline since at least 1961, and probably earlier, in the proportion of the national wealth owned by the richest tenth of the population and a corresponding increase in the proportion owned by the least wealthy tenth. Being aware of these facts, no one in England tries to explain crime rate changes by the pauperization of the workers, though most recognize that crime is more common among *certain kinds* of lower-income families.

What kinds? The association between crime and aspects of fam-

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ily life, repeatedly established in America, has also been shown to operate in England, beginning in 1925 with the pioneering study by Sir Cyril Burt of young delinquents in London, and continuing with Professor Sprott's 1954 study of delinquent and nondelinquent areas in a working-class mining town. The familial contribution to English crime does not, however, depend on whether the family is "broken"—i.e., whether one parent is absent owing to divorce or desertion—or on whether the mother is working. Absent or working parents are no more likely to have delinquent children than intact, at-home families; it is the *behavior* of the parents that is crucial. Discord, the absence of affection and consistent discipline, and improper moral instruction are the causal factors; on this, the studies of Lee Robins, Barbara Wootton, Simon Yudkin, Harriet Wilson, and John Mays all seem to agree.

That it is the behavior rather than the number of parents that accounts for delinquency helps explain why youthful crime can increase in England though there has been no increase in the proportion of single-parent families (they accounted for less than seven per cent of all households in both 1961 and 1971). What we would like to measure, but obviously cannot, is the change that has occurred in the quality of family life in the last two decades. Though it may pain the sophisticated to encounter such apparently Victorian sentiments, it seems inescapable that we have witnessed a change in the moral quality of family life that has had, along with other factors, a profound effect on the general level of public safety and security.

What these other factors may be is largely a matter of conjecture. What is striking—and, given the tendencies of American thought, salutary—is the absence in England of the kinds of conjectures heard in the United States. Neither the authorities nor the scholars in Britain "explain" rising crime by reference to poverty, drug abuse, relative deprivation, social or political frustration, rising unemployment, or the absence of legitimate opportunities. Such factors simply cannot account for the crime increase in England; one suspects they cannot account for it in the United States, either, but that our parochial perspective has prevented us from seeing that.

Crime is rising in virtually every society for which reliable data are available. Though it is possible different causes are at work in different countries, it is also possible—and, given the similarity in the trends, more than likely—that some general factors are operating on a world-wide scale. Three immediately come to mind: the growth of urbanization and affluence; the spread, especially among

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the young, of the cult of personal liberation and unfettered self-expression; and the change in attitudes of the young toward authority, schooling, and the family. There is no way of testing the effect of the subjective forces, but there is some evidence of the importance of the objective ones. For example, in England as in America, the rise in thefts from automobiles is, as Leslie Wilkins has shown, closely related to the rise in the number of registered motor vehicles. The more opportunities for theft, the more thefts will be committed, other things being equal.

## The police and crime

One of the things that may not be equal is the risk associated with crime, and one of the factors that may influence that is the number and efficiency of the police. In theory, the English police are locally controlled organizations that might, were the theory fact, have as great difficulty in adjusting their jurisdiction, resources, and training to changing criminal conditions as have their American counterparts. In reality, there is a sizeable degree of national control, financing, and standardization of the police service. Half the cost of each local force is paid for out of national funds disbursed by the Home Office. Regulations governing almost every feature of police service are promulgated by the Home Secretary, and Her Majesty's Inspector of the Constabulary carries out detailed reviews to insure that these regulations are obeyed by every local force. There is a single Police College, at Bramshill, through which virtually all of the up-and-coming senior officers have passed, or will pass, on their way to command positions in the various local forces. Each prospective constable is expected to have served in at least one other jurisdiction before he is appointed to head a local force. One dramatic measure of the degree of national control is the fact that within the last decade, the number of local police forces has been reduced from 125 to 43. A comparable reduction—by two thirds!—in the number of American police departments is simply unthinkable.

These consolidations, regulations, and training schemes are aimed at improving police efficiency. They are not, however, accompanied by equally significant increases in money or manpower. Metropolitan London, with a population of about eight million, has only 21,000 police officers (New York City has a third again as many); London has about the same number of police today as it did 40 years ago, when crime was only a fourth as common.

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The failure of the police establishment to increase in size during a period of increasing crime and greater public disorder has been accompanied by a sharp drop in the proportion of reported offenses cleared by an arrest or confession. Between 1938 and 1954, a period when crime rates were more or less stable, the "detection rate" (i.e., the proportion of all reported crimes that the police believe they have "cleared up") was between 40 and 50 per cent. As the crime rate began going up in 1955, the detection rate began going down. From 1955 to 1965, according to McClintock and Avison, it dropped by 10 per cent. This rate has continued to drop down to the present, and is lowest in the biggest cities.

There are grave difficulties in relying too heavily on "detection rates" as a measure of police efficiency, or indeed as a measure of anything. The number does not discriminate between serious and trivial offenses, between crimes solved by arresting a hitherto unknown suspect and crimes admitted to by a person already in custody, and between crimes (such as burglary) that typically require police action for their solution and crimes (such as drug abuse) that are known of only because an arrest has already been made. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that the chances that any given offender will be caught for a crime today are substantially less than his chances of being caught 10 or 20 years ago, and that his chances of being caught are lowest in the largest cities with the highest crime rates. Roughly, a robber had one chance in two of being caught in 1955, but only one chance in three in 1975. This, however, is a higher risk of apprehension than what he would face in a large American city—there, he would have only one chance in four of being caught.

One reason for the greater risk facing the English robber may be found in the nature of his offense. Robbery is still a relatively infrequent crime and, so far as one can tell, disproportionately practiced by professional or semi-professional criminals. One might think that the professional could, by his skill, more easily evade detection than the amateur, but in fact whatever advantage he acquires by virtue of craftiness is offset by his tendency to repeat the crime (thereby increasing his risk of apprehension in any given year) and to work with confederates (thus putting him at the mercy of potential informants).

A dramatic example occurred recently of the way in which the police can capitalize on these aspects of professional crime. In 1972, there were 72 bank robberies in London (there were 183 in New York that year). By 1974, Scotland Yard had cut that number to

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17—a drop of better than 75 per cent. As it turned out, most of the bank robberies were committed by one of two major gangs, one member of which turned Queen's evidence in return for a promise of leniency in his own case. He implicated his associates, who were arrested and given long prison terms. In the United States, by contrast, a large number of banks are robbed by lone wolves, acting almost on impulse, who may evade capture for long periods of time. Ordinary street muggings, by contrast, are, in London as well as in New York, the impulsive acts of young offenders and are thus difficult to check by police strategies alone.

## Police powers

The ability of the English police to reduce crime may also be assisted by the kinds of legal powers they possess, powers in some important respects more ample than those of the American police. For example, a constable may stop and search any person he reasonably suspects of carrying arms, dangerous drugs, or stolen goods. An American officer in most jurisdictions would be limited to frisking suspicious persons for weapons (i.e., "patting them down"); to search beyond this, and to seize drugs or stolen goods, could only be done legally if the search were pursuant to a warrant or incident to a lawful arrest (which in turn requires that the crime be committed in the officer's presence or that the officer have probable cause—and not mere suspicion—that a felony had been committed by the person about to be arrested).

Furthermore, an English officer may enter a building without a warrant and search the premises in which he reasonably suspects that a person who has committed a crime is hiding. An American officer would be well-advised to obtain a warrant before entering a building, even if he has probable cause to believe that there is a suspect inside.

Finally, in England an arrested person has the right to speak to an attorney (a "solicitor"), "provided that no hindrance is reasonably likely to be caused to the processes of investigation, or the administration of justice by his doing so." In other words, the police may exclude a solicitor from the questioning of an arrested person. In America, such an exclusion is permissible only if agreed to by the accused.

Perhaps of greatest importance to the operation of the English police system is that evidence gathered in violation of the rules will not automatically be excluded from the trial—in theory, no one

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goes free merely because the constable has blundered. The constable, on the other hand, is liable for serious civil, administrative, and criminal penalties if he acts improperly. Nor is this only a theoretical possibility. In 1974, 84 London officers were prosecuted and 51 were found guilty of various offenses; in another 116 cases, disciplinary action was taken. Over 90 officers resigned from the force before the completion of a criminal or disciplinary inquiry.

The American courts have used a different system to control the police: Exclude from a trial improperly gathered evidence in order, so the theory goes, to reduce the incentive for using improper means. No one can measure the extent to which the exclusionary rule as enforced in the United States results in lower rates of arrest and conviction, and thus higher rates of crime. In routine cases—the burglar caught in the act, the robber identified by an eye witness, the assaulter accused by his victim—the rule probably makes little difference. In more complex cases, where searches and interrogations are required, it may make some difference. In cases involving no complaining witness, such as drug violations, the rule may be of decisive importance.

Crime has not been the only problem to face the British police. Since 1972, there have been over 1,300 public demonstrations in greater London, 54 of which involved disorder resulting in the arrest of over 600 persons. Nearly 300 police officers were injured, as were a large but unknown number of participants and spectators. One demonstration, at Red Lion Square in June 1974, was especially difficult and ugly. A right-wing group, the National Front, sent about 900 persons on a march; about a thousand left-wing opponents staged a countermarch; nearly a thousand police officers were on hand; and 51 persons were arrested, 54 were injured, and there was one fatality.

Here, as with ordinary crime, the British police enjoy somewhat greater powers than their American counterparts. A demonstrator in London may be arrested for using threatening, abusive, or insulting words, or for carrying a sign displaying such words, or for using indecent language. American officers could not ordinarily make lawful arrests on such charges. They may, of course, arrest people for such behavior, but the charge must be for a real or claimed breach of a valid statute, such as resisting arrest or disorderly conduct.

The London police are upset by the violence which increasingly confronts them and with the behavior of the courts in punishing it. About 3,000 London bobbies were assaulted in 1974, an increase

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of 12 per cent over 1973. Sir Robert Mark, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, is openly critical of the penalties given—or not given—to unlawful and violent demonstrators. Of the 758 charges brought against demonstrators during the past three years, 575 resulted in convictions, but only 18 resulted in prison sentences—and of these, 12 were for only one month. Only 10 of the 105 convictions for assaulting a police officer produced imprisonment. "The ability to mainatin a satisfactory standard of public order in its widest sense is impaired . . . by pusillanimous laws and pusillanimous courts," Mark declared in August 1975.

Despite the rise in violent crime, the advent of terrorism in London, the continued wave of disorderly demonstrations, the frequent injury to police officers, and the increased use of firearms by criminals, there appears to be no sentiment for arming the police. "Nothing could be sillier or more irresponsible," Mark recently said to the officers at the Bramshill Police College, "than to suggest in public that in the foreseeable future the police are likely to be armed as a routine measure. There has never been less likelihood or justification for such a proposal. . . . This is a proposal with which the overwhelming majority of policemen would probably refuse to comply."

## Reforms and revisions

Just as the London police are increasingly finding themselves, contrary to custom and legend, in an adversary role with the citizenry, so also are they discovering that, contrary to custom and legend, not all their ranks are models of integrity and rectitude. In February 1972, just two months before Mark became the new commissioner, two Scotland Yard detectives were sentenced at the Old Bailey criminal courts to long prison terms for corruption. On taking office, Mark was appalled by what he saw and even more by what he suspected. "I don't know what they [the detectives] do to the enemy," he said, "but by God they frighten me." Mark, like most reform-minded police commissioners elsewhere, soon discovered that the detective service is a separate, virtually autonomous unit of the force with its own leaders and rules. Peter Brodie, for six years head of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was widely thought to have the inside track for the post of commissioner. When Mark, a man who had never served in the ranks of the Metropolitan Police (he had been chief constable in Leicester), was appointed instead, Brodie resigned. Mark promptly

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drew the battle lines with the CID, threatening to put its entire membership back in uniform, giving command over detectives to uniform officers at local police stations, creating a new unit (A10) to investigate complaints against officers, and requiring that meetings between detectives and informers be reported to superior officers.

The head of the Flying Squad was suspended from duty on charges of having gone on a Cyprus holiday with James Humphreys, the alleged "Emperor of Pornography" in London; the officer then resigned from the force. Humphreys himself boasted that he had 40 Scotland Yard men in his pocket. Of the 40, 22 have resigned, 12 are under investigation, and 6 were cleared. In all, Mark and the A10 unit investigated over a thousand cases against officers, with more to come. As of June 1975, 22 officers had been convicted on bribery or corruption charges, 20 awaited trial, and 12 had been acquitted, though nine of the 12 plus another 45 officers not formally charged had been suspended from duty or otherwise disciplined. Over 300 officers had resigned in the face of investigations.

None of this should have been surprising. It would be astonishing were it otherwise. Detectives in every force depend on informers to solve crimes. To acquire informers requires cultivating criminals. To make an arrest often requires inducing an informer to cooperate, and it is inevitable that in some cases improper means—planting evidence, using force—will be used to secure that cooperation. The London police, like their colleagues in New York, must enforce laws dealing with a number of so-called "victimless crimes." The supposedly enlightened British policy of tolerating prostitution but banning solicitation, of allowing gambling but only on licensed premises, and of permitting government clinics to prescribe heroin for addicts has not by any means eliminated the opportunities for police corruption or abuse of power in dealing with prostitutes, gamblers, pornographers, or drug users. Indeed, to a casual visitor, the abundance of obscene publications suggests that their illegality is not a matter of utmost concern to the police, just as the bewildering and often meaningless laws governing the licensing of and membership in gambling and night clubs seem almost an invitation for abuse and manipulation.

Commissioner Mark is fully aware of these problems and determined to deal with them squarely. He is just as determined, however, to confront what he takes to be the deficiencies in the rest of the criminal justice system. He is unsparing in his criticism of law-

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yers and judges—the former for obstructing the search for the truth, the latter for allowing the guilty to be lightly punished. For years, in a way unthinkable for most politically cautious (because politically vulnerable) American police chiefs (Edward Davis of Los Angeles is a conspicuous exception), Mark has pressed for revisions in the laws of criminal procedure. He was among those who, in 1967, objected to the ability of a lone juror to prevent the conviction of a guilty man. The response was a law (presented by a Labour Party minister!) that allowed for convictions by a less-than-unanimous jury, in general by 10 out of the 12 jurors (the actual formula is much more complex). By the same law, the Criminal Justice Act of 1967, the defense was required to disclose before the trial any alibi the accused planned to offer so that the police might investigate it (the entirety of the prosecution's case must be disclosed in advance).

Now Commissioner Mark and others are pressing for additional changes. He would like to waive the need for a police caution—that timeless and familiar phrase by which the arrested party is warned that what he says can be used in evidence against him; in the United States, it is known as the "Miranda warning." As Mark puts it, "The credibility of the accused should be related to his spontaneity rather than to that period of reflection and professional consultation between his original interrogation and trial, a period which has produced . . . some of the most ingenious and highly paid fiction of our time." He would also like to weaken the right not to testify in one's own trial, not perhaps by compelling testimony, but at least by allowing the prosecution to put the accused in the witness box, ask him questions, and call to the jury's attention any refusal to answer.

Mark is convinced that the system of justice is unduly biased in favor of the guilty. He would like to see a higher proportion of those who face trial be convicted, arguing that 40 per cent of those who plead innocent are acquitted, a proportion he believes unrealistically high. In all of this, he has encountered fierce opposition. His critics, among them Lord Wigoder, an officer of the Criminal Bar Association, and Michael Zander, an author and member of the London School of Economics, argue that juries are not often wrong—much less, as Mark put it, "occasionally stupid, prejudicial, and barely literate."

The vigorous argument between Mark and Zander over the acquittal rate of juries has stimulated some interesting research on jury behavior. In my view the data thus far do not show the English juries are unreasonably inclined to acquit serious offenders.

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Of greater interest to an American, however, is the remarkable importance the jury retains in the British criminal justice system. In 1973, according to Zander, 40 per cent of the persons charged in the English Crown Courts pleaded not guilty, and thus were tried before a jury. In the same year, fewer than nine per cent of the persons proceeded against on felony charges in the California Superior Courts saw a jury—the rest were handled by the judge acting alone, usually on the basis of a guilty plea. Plea bargaining in America has drastically reduced the frequency of trials, whether with or without a jury.

## Sentencing and corrections

The English response to rising crime rates during the 1960's appears, in the aggregate, to have been quite different from that in the United States. In America, the combined state and federal prison population declined from about 213,000 persons in 1960 to about 196,000 in 1970—a drop of approximately nine per cent. In England and Wales, however, the average daily population of prisons increased from 20,857 in 1961 to 25,634 in 1970—a rise of about 23 per cent.

These changes in the size of the prison population might lead one to suppose that British judges, unlike their American counterparts, responded to rising crime rates by getting tougher. That would be quite misleading. The English prison population may have gone up because judges became more severe, because there were more criminals being brought before judges who had a constant or even declining propensity to imprison, or because the kinds of crime being committed were becoming more serious.

Two things can be said: First, the chances of going to prison for having committed a serious crime are much greater in England than in America (which may help explain why English crime rates are lower than American ones). Second, the chances of going to prison for having committed a serious offense are declining in England (which may help explain why English crime rates are rising).

Take robbery, a major crime with a more or less common definition in the two countries. Because there are no national data in the United States on court dispositions, I will compare English experience with that of California, a state with relatively good statistics. In England in 1971, 26 per cent of the reported robberies resulted in some form of confinement—prison, detention center, or Bortsal (reformatory). In California in 1970, only four per cent of the rob-

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beries resulted in persons being put in custody in a jail, prison, or juvenile camp. Stated another way, England, which had only one sixth the number of reported robberies, actually sent more persons to prison or its equivalent than did the state of California.

This does not mean that English judges are six times as severe as California judges. There are, roughly speaking, two kinds of courts: the major trial courts (in California, the Superior Courts; in England, the Crown Courts) and the lesser courts that dispose of cases summarily or handle juveniles (in California, municipal and juvenile courts; in England, magistrates' and juvenile courts). If one looks only at the Superior or Crown Courts, it is not clear that English and American judges are very different. For example, among robbers appearing before Superior or Crown Court Judges, about the same proportion (well over 80 per cent) were convicted, and of these about the same proportion (perhaps three fourths) received some form of custodial sentence. (Unfortunately, we cannot compare the length of the sentences, since that is not reported in California, though it is in England.)

Far more important than the behavior of trial court judges in explaining the differing degrees of risk for robbers in the two countries is what happens to those robbers who never appear in the major trial courts at all, because they are not caught by the police, or are released by the prosecutor without charges, or are handled by the lesser courts, or are treated as juveniles. Compared to California, in England a robbery is more likely to be solved by an arrest, a person arrested is more likely to be prosecuted, and a person prosecuted in a local court or as a juvenile is more likely to be confined. Any exact comparison of British and American dispositions is imposible, however—the American data are nonexistent. But it would appear that a major reason why the risk of crime is higher in England is that young offenders, who of course account for a large fraction of all crime, are treated more severely there than in the United States.

Though the risks facing a criminal in England are high, they have been getting smaller. In 1966, 2,146 persons were brought into court charged with robbery. The great majority—85 per cent—were handled in Crown Courts (then called Courts of Assizes and Quarter Sessions). Of these, over 90 per cent were convicted; of those convicted, 60 per cent were sent to prison and another 25 per cent were placed in Borstals, or detention centers. Only 11 per cent were given some noncustodial sentence. For those going to prison, the typical sentence was two to three years. Nearly a third were sen-

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tenced for over three years. So far, the image of English justice seems confirmed: certain penalties, firmly applied.

The handful of robbers, all juveniles, dealt with in Magistrates' Courts were treated quite differently. Though nearly 90 per cent were found guilty, only 38 per cent of these were given some custodial sentence (a detention center or school for a few months) and none was sent to prison.

By 1974, the pattern had changed substantially. In that year 3,651 persons were brought into court charged with robbery. But owing in part to the fact that young persons now made up a much larger proportion of those committing robberies, a greater fraction —nearly a third—of these cases were handled in juvenile court. Of those tried in Crown Court (all adults), about the same proportion as in 1966 were convicted, but a somewhat lower percentage of these were sent to prison—51 per cent in 1974 compared to 60 per cent in 1966. The prison terms remained about the same. But in Magistrates' Court, the proportion found guilty was lower (79 per cent in 1974 compared to 89 per cent in 1966), and of those convicted, a smaller proportion were given custodial sentences (20 per cent in 1974 compared to 38 per cent in 1966). And whereas this more lenient treatment affected only about 300 accused robbers in 1966, it affected over a thousand in 1974.

In short, the probability that an accused robber would be given a custodial sentence in England and Wales fell from 62 chances out of 100 in 1966 to 47 chances out of 100 in 1974. The proportion of reported robberies, rather than of prosecuted robbers, that result in a custodial sentence is, of course, even smaller and has also been declining—from 30 chances in 100 in 1966, to 20 in 100 in 1974.

It is unlikely that these changes in sentencing patterns are the result of any centrally made decision. The English judiciary, like the American, is constitutionally independent of executive authority and, again like the American, is not organized or disposed to implement uniform sentencing policies. Since the early 1960's, there have been annual conferences of judges at which sentencing was discussed and, since 1966, a newly appointed magistrate must take a training course that includes sentencing exercises. The Home Office also has published a handbook on sentencing. For all that, however, there remain substantial disparities in sentencing, and for essentially the same reason they exist in the United States—courses, conferences, and handbooks are all very well, but when public officials are given substantial discretionary power, they will not surrender it, they will use it. Sentencing conferences have not been

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effective in this country and there is little reason to suppose they are more effective abroad.

This would certainly explain why there appears to be as much disparity among the sentences of various judges in England as there is in other countries. One study, for example showed that the proportion of young persons given probation was 12 per cent in one town and 79 per cent in a neighboring one. Another study found equally wide disparities among Magistrates' Courts dealing with juveniles in London; still another found wide differences in the proportion of adults sent to prison in the Magistrates' Courts throughout England and Wales.

## Rehabilitation, deterrence, and justice

Nonetheless, the broad changes in English sentencing patterns, however unevenly they are proceeding, seem consistent with, if not dictated by, the policies of English governments extending back well into the last century. The rehabilitative ideal has been the object of the same veneration in England as in America. Originally that ideal was to be sought within the penitentiary. The Gladstone Report of 1895 urged that prisons be designed to develop the "moral instincts" of their inmates and thus to "turn them out better men and women, physically and mentally, than when they came in." But soon rehabilitation was thought to require non-prison alternatives. Borstals for "youth training" were created. But most important, the "major objective of English penal policy" in the years after the Gladstone Report came to be, as Richard F. Sparks has written, "to keep as many offenders as possible out of prison."

A major step in the direction of increased reliance on noncustodial policies was the Criminal Justice Act of 1967, authorizing a court to suspend a sentence of imprisonment that does not exceed two years and, even more importantly, *requiring* that sentences not in excess of six months be suspended unless the offense was a violent one or certain other conditions were met. A Parole Board was also created, authorized to release from prison persons who had served one third of their sentences (or 12 months, whichever was greater). In 1972, another Criminal Justice Act was passed that modified the 1967 law—suspended sentences were no longer mandatory, but still strongly urged. It also instructed judges not to sentence anyone to prison who has not already been in prison unless they were satisfied that no other method of dealing with him was "appropriate."

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Noncustodial treatment programs became very popular among British penal reformers of all political persuasions. Sir Arthur Peterson, then the permanent secretary (i.e., senior civil servant) at the Home Office, was reported as expressing doubts in 1973 about the value of prison even for protecting society from offenders and as hoping that falling crime rates (they did decline, briefly, in 1973 before shooting up again) would reduce opposition to the further development of noncustodial programs. The California Treatment Program (CTP), which had been praised (prematurely, as it turns out) by President Johnson's Crime Commission, was also widely hailed in England. In 1970, William F. Deedes, then a Conservative member of parliament and now the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, endorsed the CTP approach—intensive probation and treatment programs for offenders returned to the community rather than sent to prison—unaware that as he spoke a reanalysis of the CTP data in the United States showed that claims for its crime-reduction potential had been exaggerated.

A policy of decarceration was supported by Robert Carr, Conservative Home Secretary, and continued by Roy Jenkins, his Labour successor. In late 1975, the Home Office Planning Unit described to an interviewer its major task as being to find a way of reducing the size of the prison population, partly to save money and end overcrowding but also, it frankly admitted, because of the ideological view that prison is an inappropriate way of dealing with offenders.

Despite the hope that prison populations could be reduced, they have in fact grown. This is not the result of the sentencing practices of judges but of the rise in the number of crimes being committed: On this, the careful studies of Richard F. Sparks are quite conclusive. Indeed, if the harsher prewar sentencing practices were still in effect, the prison population today would be vastly larger than it is. In 1968, for example, about three fifths of all those in prison were discharged after only four months. Furthermore, as in the United States, those sent to prison tend to have many previous convictions, though often not many previous prison sentences. Of the more than 2000 adult men sent to prison in 1967 for having committed a violent crime (other than murder), over 87 per cent had one prior conviction and over 55 per cent had five or more prior convictions. Despite these long records, over a third had never been in prison before and over half had only been in once.

England would seem ripe for the kind of debate that has recently developed in the United States over the crime-reduction potential of prisons, either by virtue of their deterrent effect on would-be of-

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fenders or their incapacitative effect on actual ones. As yet, little informed debate on this issue has emerged, in part because official circles in England are less willing than those in the United States to concede the inefficacy of rehabilitation. In America, persons of both parties and at all levels of government—President Gerald Ford, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Governor Edmund Brown of California, Attorney General Edward H. Levi—are aware of and have taken fully into account the findings of Robert Martinson and others that rehabilitation programs, noncustodial as well as custodial, have been ineffective. No such recognition has yet been expressed by comparable British officials, even though British scholars—notably Roger Hood, Leslie Wilkins, and Sir Rupert Cross—have come to almost precisely the same conclusions as their American counterparts.

Where British scholarship has lagged has not been in studies of recidivism but in those on deterrence. Statistical analyses in the United States have consistently, though not conclusively, supported the view that the higher the probability of arrest and imprisonment in a given jurisdiction, the lower the crime rate, other things (such as the characteristics of the population) being equal. I am aware of only one British study of this sort—a 1973 paper by R. A. Carr-Hill and N. H. Stern. Applying the customary econometric techniques to data for the police districts of England and Wales, they found that, other things being equal, the greater the probability of arrest, the lower the rate of indictable offenses. There was also a significant, though weaker, relationship between imprisonment and crime—the higher the proportion of convicted persons receiving custodial sentences, the lower the offense rate. These results are similar to those obtained with American data, yet there has been little effort in England either to test further the approach or to weigh seriously its policy implications. The Home Office, which boasts, in addition to a Planning Unit, a Research Unit and a Statistical Unit, does not seem inclined to pursue this line of inquiry.

Instead of attempting, soberly and carefully, to analyze the criminal justice system to discover and measure such effects as it might have on crime rates under alternative sentencing policies, English opinion seems instead on the verge of a major ideological brawl between "liberal" and "conservative" opinion. The chairman of the Howard League, Louis Blom-Cooper, and others are pressing vigorously for abolition of prison for all but the most dangerous criminal offenders and for greater reliance on "a continuing programme of adjustment" for most offenders based on "the control and supervision of offenders within the community" on terms to be set not by

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judges, but by administrative authorities who would decide which, if any, of their charges "needed" confinement. The treatment perspective, the indeterminate sentence, and the use of (never clearly specified) "community" resources is a view very much alive and well in England; the report of the Advisory Council on the Penal System regarding young offenders goes far in this direction, though not quite as far as Mr. Blom-Cooper, a member of the Council who dissented from the report, would like.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Sgt. Leslie Male, chairman of the Police Federation, who is calling, on behalf of his organization, for more police, more prisons, and more jail sentences —instead of fines—to counter the "frightening" increase in crime.

At issue is not simply the question of public safety versus prison amenities or deterrence versus rehabilitation, but issues of justice. Roger Hood, at Oxford, for example, favors offenders spending less time in prison, but he argues that the terms of their time inside and their supervision outside should be set by judges on the basis of determinate sentences and legal criteria, not by administrators on the basis of indeterminate sentences and therapeutic objectives. It is a view that has come to be widely held in the United States but official circles in England tend to dismiss it by referring to Hood, wearily, as "that due process fellow."

## Crime and British politics

Thus far the primacy of economic issues and (by American standards) the infrequency of serious violent crime has permitted the debate over the criminal justice system in England to proceed sedately, in measured tones, among a small group of attentive observers. The complaints of Sir Robert Mark and the far tougher statements of the Police Federation may be harbingers of what is to come if crime continues to rise at its present rate, and if each governmental commission examining the matter continues to respond by devising new ways of putting offenders back on the street as quickly as possible.

British politics handles crime differently from American politics, and not simply because the British have less violent crime. Party control of nominations for seats in the House of Commons and the absence of much in the way of an independent local government reduce significantly the opportunity or incentive for a person to launch or expand a political career by developing a following around a certain issue. There are a number of American politicians who

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have used "crime in the streets" as an issue, often with success; such behavior is far less likely in England. Political advancement comes more from party conformity than from popular appeals. On the other hand, American elected officials have had great difficulty in changing the American criminal justice system—the very decentralization, party weakness, and governmental fragmentation that make issue appeals so rewarding make legislative or administrative action on the basis of those appeals so difficult. The major federal piece of crime legislation—the Safe Streets Act of 1968—changed little in the criminal justice system except the amount of federal money spent on it. There have been a number of changes at the state level, but they have been piecemeal and often inconsistent.

British public officials, though not attracted by the political appeal of crime, can, as members of the majority party, participate in making substantial changes when they are so inclined. The entire criminal courts system was reorganized by the Courts Act of 1971, sentencing rules were altered substantially by the Criminal Justice Act of 1967 and again by the Criminal Justice Act of 1972, and capital punishment was abolished by the Murder Act of 1965. It would be unthinkable—and perhaps unconstitutional—for such sweeping national changes to be voted by the American Congress, yet the arenas in which changes might occur, the states, are poorly staffed or researched, and thus knowledge of current policy is lacking—to say nothing of good ideas about future practice.

However much greater the British political capacity to act may be, that capacity has not yet extended to devoting significantly greater resources to criminal justice—the police are understaffed, and the number and variety of correctional institutions and programs are inadequate. Even the British tradition of a speedy trial has suffered under the crush of business in the major Crown Courts. In 1973, a person being proceeded against in the Old Bailey (the Central Criminal Court in London) had to wait in excess of six months for a trial if he were out on bail and nearly four months if he were in custody. Most importantly, the inclination to test carefully the consequences for crime of alternative sentencing policies does not yet seem great.

English virtue, at least as measured by the violent crime rate, is not collapsing under the weight of political turmoil and economic crisis. Crime began going up in the 1950's, long before Britain's problems became as grave as they are today. But the present problems are straining its ability to respond to crime and perhaps impeding its ability to think about them.

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# Patterns of black excellence

THOMAS SOWELL

THE history of the advancement of black Americans is almost a laboratory study of human achievement, for it extends back to slavery and was accomplished in the face of the strongest opposition confronting any American racial or ethnic group. Yet this mass advancement is little discussed and seldom researched, except for lionizing some individuals or compiling a record of *political* milestones. But the story of how millions of people developed from the depths of slavery—acquired work skills, personal discipline, human ideals, and the whole complex of knowledge and values required for achievement in a modern society—is a largely untold story. A glance at the mass of human misery around the world shows that such development is by no means an automatic process. Yet how it was accomplished remains a matter of little concern—in contrast to the unflagging interest in social pathology.

One small, but important, part of the advancement of black Americans has been educational achievement. Here, as in other areas, the pathology is well known and extensively documented, while the healthy or outstanding functioning is almost totally unknown and unstudied. Yet educational excellence has been achieved by black Americans.[1] Current speculative discussions of the "pre-

[1] Thomas Sowell, "Black Excellence: The Case of Dunbar High School," *The Public Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1974), pp. 1-21.

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requisites" for the quality education of black children proceed as if educational excellence were only a remote possibility, to be reached by futuristic experimental methods—indeed, as if black children were a special breed who could be "reached" only on special wave lengths. When quality education for black youngsters is seen, instead, as something that has *already* been achieved—that happened decades ago—then an attempt to understand the ingredients of such education can be made on the basis of that experience, rather than as a search for exotic revelations. The problem is to assess the nature of black excellence, its sources, and its wider implications for contemporary education and for social policy in general.

There are a number of successful black schools in various cities that exemplify this educational excellence—for the purposes of this study, six high schools and two elementary schools were selected. The high schools were chosen from a list, compiled by the late Horace Mann Bond, which shows those black high schools whose alumni included the most doctorates during the period from 1957 through 1962. The two elementary schools were added because of their outstanding performance by other indices. Some of the schools were once outstanding but are no longer, while others are currently academically successful. The schools were researched not only in terms of such "hard" data as test scores but also in terms of such intangibles as atmosphere and school/community relations, as these could be either observed or reconstructed from documents and from interviews with alumni, former teachers, and others. On the basis of this research, several questions were raised:

1. Is black "success" largely an individual phenomenon—simply "cream rising to the top"—or are the successes produced in such isolated concentrations as to suggest powerful forces at work in special social or institutional settings? Strong and clear patterns would indicate that there are things that can be done through social policy to create or enhance the prospect of individual development.

2. Does the environment for successful black education have to be a special "black" environment—either culturally, or in terms of the race of the principals and teachers, or in terms of the particular teaching methods used? Are such conventional indices as test scores more or less relevant to black students? For example, do these top black schools have average I.Q. scores higher than the average (around 85) for black youngsters in the country as a whole? Are their I.Q. scores as high as white schools of comparable performance by other criteria?

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3. How much of the academic success of these schools can be explained as a product of the "middle-class" origins of its students? Have most of the children taught in these schools been the sons and daughters of doctors and lawyers, or have they represented a cross section of the black community?

4. How important was the surrounding community as an influence on the quality of education in these schools? Did this influence come through involvement in school decision-making or through moral support in other ways?

5. How many of the assumed "prerequisites" of quality education actually existed in these outstanding schools? Did they have good facilities, an adequate budget, innovative programs, internal harmony, etc.?

6. What kind of individual was shaped by these institutions? More bluntly, was the black excellence of the past an accommodationist or "Uncle Tom" success molded by meek or cautious educators, or the product of bold individuals with high personal and racial pride?

Although these questions will be treated in the course of this article, the first question is perhaps the easiest to answer immediately. Black successes—whether measured by academic degrees or by career achievement—have not occurred randomly among the millions of black people scattered across the United States, as might be expected if individual natural ability were the major factor. On the contrary, a very few institutions in a few urban centers with a special history have produced a disproportionate share of black pioneers and high achievers. In Horace Mann Bond's study, five per cent of the high schools produced 21 per cent of the later Ph.D.'s.[2] Four of the six high schools studied here—McDonough 35 High School, in New Orleans; Frederick Douglass High School, in Baltimore; Dunbar High School, in Washington, D.C.; and Booker T. Washington High School, in Atlanta—produced a long list of black breakthroughs, including the first black state superintendent of schools (Wilson Riles, from McDonough 35), the first black Supreme Court Justice (Thurgood Marshall, from Frederick Douglass), the first black general (Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., from Dunbar), the first black Cabinet member (Robert C. Weaver, from Dunbar), the discoverer of blood plasma (Charles R. Drew, from Dunbar), a Nobel Prize winner (Martin Luther King, Jr., from

[2] Horace Mann Bond, "The Negro Scholar and Professional in America," *The American Negro Reference Book* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 562.

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Booker T. Washington), and the only black Senator in this century (Edward W. Brooke, from Dunbar). From the same four schools, this list can be extended down to many regional and local "firsts," as well as such national "firsts" as the first black federal judge (William H. Hastie, from Dunbar), the first black professor at a major university (Allison Davis, from Dunbar, at the University of Chicago), and others. All of this from just four schools suggests some systematic social process at work, rather than anything as geographically random as outstanding individual ability—though these particular individuals had to be personally outstanding, besides being the products of special conditions.

The locations of these four schools are suggestive: Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New Orleans, and Atlanta. Baltimore, New Orleans, and Washington were the three largest communities of "free persons of color" in the Southern or border states in 1850.[3] None of these schools goes back to 1850, and some of them are relatively new; but the communities in which they developed had long traditions among the old families, and historical head starts apparently have enduring consequences. New Orleans had the most prosperous and culturally advanced community of "free persons of color" and the largest number of high schools on H. M. Bond's list—all three of which are still outstanding high schools today.

## Atlanta: Booker T. Washington High School

When Booker T. Washington High School was founded in 1924, it was the first public high school for Negroes in Atlanta and in the state of Georgia, and one of the first in the nation. However, the black community of Atlanta had had both primary and secondary education for its children long before that. In 1869, the American Missionary Society—which greatly influenced quality education for Southern blacks—established in Atlanta several "colleges" and "universities," whose initial enrollments were actually concentrated in elementary and secondary study, with only a few real college students.[4] The first principal of Booker T. Washington High School was, in fact, a man who had been in charge of the high school program at Morris Brown College.

Professor Charles Lincoln Harper was principal of Booker T.

[3] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, Macmillan, 1971), p. 74.

[4] Henry Reid Hunter, *The Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta, Georgia: 1845-1937* (Office of the School System Historian, Atlanta Public Schools, 1974), pp. 49-52.

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Washington for its first 19 years, and a major influence on the shaping of the institution. By all accounts, he was a man of great courage, ability, and capacity for hard work. Far from being middle-class in origin, he came from a black farm family living on a white-owned plantation. As a child, he attended the only available school, which was 10 miles away and which held classes only three months of the year. Somehow Harper managed to educate himself and go on to college, and later to graduate work at the University of Chicago and Columbia. In addition to becoming a principal, Harper was a civil rights activist at a time when economic retaliation, lynchings, and Ku Klux Klan violence were an ever-present threat. The times were such that many blacks gave money to the NAACP *anonymously* through Harper, who bore the onus of converting it into checks to mail to the NAACP headquarters in New York. Thurgood Marshall said that Harper "stood out head and shoulders above many others because of his complete lack of fear of physical or economic repercussions." [5]

As principal, it was common for Harper to work Saturdays, and to spend part of his summer vacation taking promising students to various colleges and universities, trying to gain admission or scholarships for them. A contemporary described him as a man of "utter sincerity" who "lives on the job." Though he was a man who drove himself, with teachers he was "affable" and "easy to approach," and he showed "vast stores of patience" with students. A man of modest means—he owned only one suit—he nevertheless gave small sums of money to poor children in his school when they needed it. Yet for all his dedication to black people, he was not uncritical of black institutions. As late as 1950, he said, "There is not a single first-class, accredited college in the state for the education of Negro students." [6] To say that must have required considerable courage in Atlanta, home of Morehouse, Spelman, and Morris Brown colleges, and of many proud alumni.

The cohesion of the Atlanta black community and the political sophistication of its leaders were directly responsible for the building of Booker T. Washington High School. A public high school for Negroes was unprecedented in the state of Georgia, and some members of the all-white school board considered it an outrageous demand. Black voters enforced their demand by turning out in sufficient numbers—in the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan—repeatedly to

[5] "They Knew Charles L. Harper," *The Herald* (October 1955), p. 19.
[6] Quoted in V. W. Hodges, "Georgians Join Atlantans in Tribute to Mr. Harper," in *The Atlanta World* (June 14, 1950).

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defeat school bond issues until it was agreed that the high school would be built. But the board of education did not go one step beyond its grudging agreement: The school building alone was built on bare land. Harper conducted a fund-raising campaign in the community to provide landscaping and to build a statue of the school's namesake in front of the entrance. The board of education's tightfistedness continued to be a problem for the school for decades. Classes were large in the early years: 45 to 50 pupils per class was not unusual. The students received hand-me-down textbooks discarded after years of use in white schools.

Extra efforts by Harper, the staff, and the community overcame these obstacles. The community contributed money for the building of an athletic stadium and helped support school athletics out of their own pockets. The board of education provided no money at all for athletic uniforms, or for athletes to travel. However, the coach obtained uniforms from a local sports store and drove the teams in his own car, with gas supplied free by a gas station in the community. The team ate hot dogs donated by a black drugstore. On their own time, teachers drove students to cultural events during the spring vacation. The teachers of this era also maintained closets full of second-hand clothing and shoes for needy pupils—all brought to school in paper bags, so that no one would ever know whose old clothes he was wearing.

The atmosphere in the school during this era was a blend of support, encouragement, and rigid standards. One alumnus described it as a "happy school" with "hard taskmasters." Of one teacher it was said: "She did not tolerate sloppy work any more than a Marine sergeant tolerates a coward on a battlefield." Another teacher "threw homework at you like you were in college instead of the sixth grade." Those who did not learn on the first try in school stayed after school for as many days as it took to learn. Yet the students found the teachers inspiring rather than oppressive. A sense of individual worth and pride of achievement were constantly sought. "You couldn't go wrong," an alumnus said: "The teachers wouldn't let you."

Racial and political awareness were part of the early curriculum but traditional subjects—including Latin—dominated. Racial pride was developed by example as well as by words. Many teachers refused the indignity of riding in the back of segregated buses, which meant that some of them had to walk during years when cars were rare.

In the 50 years of its existence, Booker T. Washington has had

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only five principals: C. L. Harper for 17 years (1924-1941), C. N. Cornell for 20 years (1941-1961), J. Y. Moreland for eight years (1961-1969), before being promoted to area superintendent, and A. A. Dawson for four years (1969-1973), also before being promoted to area superintendent. The present principal, Robert L. Collins, Jr., assumed the post in 1973. He is a graduate of the school, and his daughter is the third generation of his family to attend.

The school has undergone some metamorphoses in the half-century of its existence. It is no longer the only black high school in the city, and the neighborhood in which it is located is run down —both factors tending to lower academic performance—while there are such offsetting tendencies as better financial support and better physical equipment. The available records do not go back far enough to permit comparison with the performance of the early years, but the current academic performance of Booker T. Washington is far from that of an elite school. On a variety of tests, its students scored significantly below the national average, and below the average of other Atlanta high schools. The demeanor of its students also seems much more in keeping with that of a typical urban ghetto school than a school with a distinguished past. Black Atlantans seemed defensive about discussing these changes, though one characterized the school as "a little thuggish" today. It is not unusual for a school which loses its monopoly of black high school students and is located in a declining neighborhood to have difficulties maintaining standards. Other schools in this study have suffered similar fates. But the justifiable pride of Atlantans in the school's past makes it difficult to trace the process by which the present uninspiring situation came about. Certainly it is clear that the present financial resources and political clout—a black superintendent of schools and a black mayor of the city—are no substitute for the human resources that enabled earlier generations to overcome heavy handicaps.

Interestingly enough, the current principal is not as defensive as other Atlantans inside or outside the school system. While he will not openly concede a decline in academic performance, he freely acknowledges a number of factors which make it a harder job to get good performance from students of a given level of ability. Chief among these is less parental support and cooperation: Parents may be more "involved" in school decisions today, but they are less cooperative than in earlier decades. In particular, parents are less willing to take the side of the school teacher or principal

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who wants an able student to take more demanding courses instead of following the path of least resistance. Even when the parents understand the long-run educational need, they are often not willing to risk immediate problems in relations with their children. Discipline problems are also more numerous and more difficult, and there are fewer methods available for dealing with them. Corporal punishment was still permissible in the mid-1940's, when Collins was a student, but it is no longer an option. Moreover, whatever discipline is imposed is less likely to have parental support or reinforcement, and more likely to provoke parental indignation. Still, Collins works at it—12 hours or more a day. It is too early to tell if he can turn the situation around, especially since the general problem extends well beyond Atlanta, is not limited to black schools, and has had a varying impact on schools across the country.

### Atlanta: St. Paul of the Cross

A very different school in many ways is St. Paul of the Cross. Its openness was the first of many contrasts. Records just received from a testing organization were taken straight from the envelope and spread out on the table for inspection. This confidence was based on years of solid performance. A sample of I.Q. scores for this Catholic elementary school shows them consistently at or above the national norm of 100—which is to say, significantly above the national average of about 85 for other black children. This school came to our attention as a result of an earlier research project surveying I.Q. scores. The mean I.Q. of the St. Paul student body for the years surveyed (1960-1972) ranged from 99 to 107.

St. Paul is located in a middle-class black suburban area of Atlanta, but its students are drawn from various parts of the city. Of all the schools in this study for which we were able to obtain the data, St. Paul has the highest proportion of white-collar and professional occupations among its students' parents. For the period 1960-1972, 40 per cent of the parents were either white-collar or professional. Our breakdown shows 33 per cent white-collar and seven per cent professional, but that is based on counting school teachers in the white-collar category, and the two categories are presented together simply to avoid needless (and endless) debate over where the line should be drawn. For the other schools in this study, this internal breakdown is of little significance, since the two categories together usually add up to no more than 10 per cent. But although St. Paul has a substantial proportion of white-

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collar and professional parents for a black school, it is still not predominantly middle-class, in the usual sense of having children whose parents are doctors, engineers, or professors, or are in similar occupations.

Quiet, calm, and orderliness prevail in St. Paul's modern building, even during the changing of class. Yet the students do not seem either repressed or apprehensive. There was talking during the change of classes, but no yelling or fighting. Corporal punishment is one of the disciplinary options, but it is seldom used. Discipline is usually maintained through individual discussions between the teachers—half nuns and half laity—and the children. For example, a little boy who had spilled his soda in the hall without cleaning it up was told that the cleaning woman works hard to keep the school nice, and it was suggested that he apologize to her for making her job harder—but all this was done very gently without burdening him with guilt. This calm, low-key approach is made possible by small classes (about 30), small student body (about 200), and an automatically self-selective admissions process, since hard-core troublemakers are unlikely to apply for admission to a private school.

Instruction is highly individualized. Instead of the classic picture of the teacher standing in front of the class lecturing, the more usual scene in the classroom at St. Paul was a teacher very much engaged with an individual student or a small group, while the other members of the class worked intently on their respective assignments. This individualized approach extended even to allowing students to go to the library on their own. The child's self-confidence is built up in subtle ways. However, there was no single teaching method or formula imposed from above. The usual bureaucratic paperwork was absent at St. Paul. Records were well kept and complete, but not cluttered with trivia. Administrators had time to circulate through the school and get to know the students, rather than being stuck at their desks behind piles of paper. Morale is high enough to attract lay teachers at lower salaries than they receive elsewhere.

St. Paul has had only four principals in its 21-year history. Three of these were nuns of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the other was a black layman appointed in the 1960's at the height of the emphasis on "blackness." However, the initiative for a black lay principal came from whites in the religious order, rather than from either the black community or black parents. The current principal is a white nun.

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The children are encouraged to take pride in their black heritage, but the curriculum is heavily oriented toward the basics of education—especially reading. There is also religious instruction, but the student body is about 70 per cent *non*-Catholic, though it was initially predominantly Catholic. Black non-Catholic students in Catholic schools are common in cities around the country, as black parents seek the education, the discipline, and the sheer physical safety which the public schools often cannot offer. The tuition is modest—about $450 per year for non-Catholics and $360 for Catholics—and the school runs a deficit, which is made up from general church funds.

Though quite different from Booker T. Washington High School in many ways, St. Paul has one problem in common with it: Some parents think that the school is *too* intellectually challenging for their children. Interestingly, this view is more common among those parents who are public school teachers.

### Baltimore: Frederick Douglass High School

As of 1850, the 25,000 "free persons of color" in Baltimore were the largest number in any city in the United States, so it is not surprising that Baltimore's high school for black children was among the earliest founded, in 1892. Like many other black schools throughout the United States, Frederick Douglass High School survived for decades with inadequate financial support, was located in a succession of hand-me-down buildings that whites had discarded, and was stocked with old textbooks used for years before by white students, refinished desks from white schools, second-hand sports equipment, and so on. Douglass was for many years the only black high school in Baltimore. The school contained academic, vocational, commercial, and "general" programs. Because the surrounding communities had no high schools for Negro children, black students from outside Baltimore also came to Douglass—some legitimately, through stiff tests given to outsiders, and many others by the simple expedient of giving false addresses in Baltimore, often the addresses of relatives or friends.

Although pupils from Baltimore faced no tests for admission, there was a self-selection factor at work. Those without sufficient interest or skills would have dropped out before high school, in an era when students left school at earlier ages and when substandard students repeated grades, instead of today's automatic promotion. In short, while Frederick Douglass in its early decades was formal-

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ly an all-inclusive black high school serving Baltimore and vicinity, in practice there were automatic selection factors which screened out the wholly uninterested or negative student. These were not high academic admission standards, such as elite private schools imposed, but even this wholly informal screening was sufficient to keep the school free of "discipline problems."

The teachers included men and women trained at the leading colleges and universities in the country. An alumnus of the 1930's recalls that his principal, Mason Hawkins, had a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and his teachers included individuals with degrees from Harvard, Brown, Smith, and Cornell. They were trained in content rather than educational "methods"—and their teaching styles approximated those of rigorous colleges: discussions rather than lectures, reading lists rather than day-by-day assignments, papers rather than exclusive reliance on "objective" tests. But there was no single teaching method imposed from above. The teachers often put in extra time, without pay, especially to work with promising students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Students were given pride in their achievements as individuals, but no mystique of "blackness." Negro history week was observed, and there was an elective course in black history, but it was not a prominent element in the curriculum. Although formal guidance counselling was minimal, the individual teachers actively counselled students on their own. But the teachers' concern for the students took the form of getting them to meet standards, not of bringing the standards down to their level of preparation. In reminiscing about her 40 years as teacher and administrator at Douglass High School, former principal Mrs. Edna Campbell said of her students, "Even though you are pushing for them, and dying inside for them, you have to let them know that they have to produce."

The interest of the teachers in the students was reciprocated by the interest of the parents in supporting the teachers and the school. "The school could do no wrong" in the eyes of parents, according to alumni. Parental involvement was of this supportive nature rather than an actual involvement in school decision-making. "Parent power" or "community control" were unheard-of concepts then.

Most of the whites in Baltimore were relatively unaware of Frederick Douglass High School—they did not know or care whether it was good or bad—and this indifference extended to the board of education as well. Under the dual school system in the era of

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racial segregation, the lack of interest in black schools by the all-white board of education allowed wide latitude to black subordinates to run the black part of the system, so long as no problems became visible. "Benign neglect" is perhaps the most charitable characterization of this policy. In short, Douglass High School's achievements were not a result of white input, at either the administrative or the teaching levels.

Color differences within the black community were significant in the school as well. Light-skinned alumni tended to minimize this factor, but darker-skinned alumni sometimes still carry bitter memories. One man, now an official of the Baltimore school system, recalls being maneuvered out of the honor of being class valedictorian at Douglass, in favor of a lighter-skinned student from a socially prominent family.

Like several of the schools studied, Douglass' days of glory are past. A decline began with the building of other black high schools in Baltimore and became precipitous in the wake of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision in 1954. While the mean I.Q. in the academic program at Douglass ranged from 93 to 105 for the 20 years before the 1954 decision, it fell immediately below 90 in 1955 and remained in the 80's from February 1955 through February 1958. This reflected the exodus of more capable students to white high schools. A concerted effort was made to reverse this trend in the 1960's, especially from 1965 to 1973, when Mrs. Edna Campbell was the principal. Our sampling of test scores for this period indicates some success. I.Q. scores went back into the 90's from 1965 through 1971, the last year for which we have a sample of 20 or more scores.

Today, in its decline, Frederick Douglass High School has better physical facilities, some integration of the faculty, and more parental input into the decision-making process, as well as a Baltimore school system dominated by black officials. There is little evidence that this compensates for what it has lost. Indeed, some knowledgeable people in Baltimore believe that it is precisely the growth of "student rights" and "parent power" that is responsible for declining discipline in schools. There certainly was evidence of such discipline problems at Douglass. A researcher collecting data for this study had her purse snatched in the school building itself, and some weeks earlier there had been a shooting there. This was a far cry from the school that had once been second in the nation in black Ph.D.'s among its alumni, and the only black school to produce a Supreme Court justice.

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## New Orleans: McDonough 35 High School

New Orleans has had a unique role in the history of American race relations, and so it is not surprising that the city has had not one, but three outstanding black high schools on Horace Mann Bond's list—and all three are *still* outstanding. Long before the Civil War, the free Negro community in New Orleans had rights, privileges, and economic success well in advance of its counterpart in any other American city. By 1850, "free persons of color" owned *$15 million* worth of taxable property in New Orleans—one fifth of the total taxable property in the city.

The pattern of race relations in New Orleans had been established before the city became a part of the United States as a result of the Louisiana Purchase in 1812, and it was—and largely remained—the pattern common to Latin America, rather than the pattern of Anglo-Saxon slave societies in the Western Hemisphere. For example, the "free colored" population of Latin America had a far wider range of occupations open to them than did American Negroes, and they often dominated the skilled artisan trades in Latin countries—simply because there were just not enough whites. The French, Spanish, and Portuguese who colonized the Western Hemisphere did not bring women, families, or a working class with them to the extent that the Anglo-Saxons did, and so were both economically and sexually more dependent upon the indigenous populations and those of African descent. This dependency led to a greater relaxation of racism in practice, even though the Latins subscribed in principle to the same "white supremacy" doctrines as the Anglo-Saxons.

New Orleans, as a former French (and Spanish) colony, reflected the Latin pattern in the skills of "free persons of color," few of whom were laborers, many of whom were small businessmen, some of whom were wealthy, and a few of whom were even commercial slave owners. New Orleans also reflected the multicolored caste system characteristic of Latin American countries, in contrast to the stark black/white dichotomy of Anglo-Saxon nations. The celebrated "quadroon balls" of antebellum New Orleans were but one aspect of this system.

Segments of the "free colored" population of New Orleans had been giving their children quality education (sometimes including college abroad) for more than a century before the first black public high school was founded in 1916. This school—McDonough 35 High School—was for many years the only public high school for New Orleans Negroes, but it was preceded by, and accompanied

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by, private black secondary schools, including Catholic schools—again, reflecting the Latin influence. Two Catholic high schools—St. Augustine and Xavier Preparatory—and McDonough 35 make up today's three outstanding black high schools in New Orleans.

So many schools in New Orleans are named for philanthropist John McDonough that numbers are added to distinguish them. McDonough 35 High School is outstanding among these. It has had only four principals in its nearly 50-year history. The first principal, John W. Hoffman, was a well-traveled man with a cosmopolitan outlook. The second principal, Lucien V. Alexis, was a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy ('14) and Harvard ('18), and was an "iron-fisted" ex-Army officer. The third principal, Mack J. Spears, was a more diplomatic man with considerable political savvy—which proved to be decisive in saving the school from the physical or educational extinction which came upon other outstanding black high schools during the time when "integration" was regarded as an educational panacea. The current principal, Clifford J. Francis, is a quiet, thoughtful man who accepts overtime work as a normal part of his job. He runs a smoothly operating, high-quality school which, for the first time, has a good physical plant and a good racially-integrated staff.

When McDonough 35 was opened in 1917, it was housed in a building built in the 1880's. As late as 1954, this building was heated by potbellied stoves, with the students keeping the fires going by carrying coal. When a hurricane passed through New Orleans in 1965, the ancient building simply collapsed. At this point, the all-white board of education decided to disband the school and assign its pupils to other schools in New Orleans. But, unlike other outstanding black schools which were destroyed by white officials who were unaware of their quality, McDonough 35 fought back. Principal Mack Spears organized community support to save the school, lobbied Congressmen, and ultimately obtained the use of an abandoned federal court house to house the institution until a new school building could be constructed.

The institution he saved was one which was an inspiration to its students, as well as a leading producer of later black Ph.D.'s. By chance, I happened to encounter Wilson Riles, the California State Superintendent of Schools, the day after my first visit to McDonough 35, and the very mention of the school's name caused his face to light up and provoked a flood of warm memories of his student days there. He credited the school with taking him and other black youngsters from an economically and culturally

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limited background, and giving them both the education and the self-confidence to advance in later life. Mack Spears, a student and later a principal at McDonough 35, told a very similar story. Spears was the son of a poor farmer, but he remembers vividly how his teachers promoted the idea of the worth of the individual—how they always called the boys "Mister" and the girls "Miss," emotionally important titles denied even adult Negroes throughout the South at that time.

Although the school had few counsellors in its earlier days, the teachers acted as counsellors, and as instructors and role models. But with all the psychological strengthening that was an integral part of the educational process, there was no parochial "blackness" in McDonough 35. Cultural expansion was the goal. Questions about "black English" in McDonough 35 brought a "hell no!" from Spears. The current principal more gently observed that this was a recent and minor matter, of interest to only a few young white teachers.

Like some other outstanding black high schools, McDonough 35 suffered a decline in quality as other black high schools were built in the same city and as neighborhood changes left it in a less desirable part of town. At one point in the 1950's, there was a controversy over the right of its teachers to carry guns for self-protection. The academic deterioration of this period matched the deterioration in social conditions and morale. The median I.Q. of the school population in the mid-1950's was in the low 80's; but under the new policies introduced when Spears became principal in 1954, I.Q.'s began to rise, to a peak of 99 in the 1965-1966 school year; and they have remained in the mid-to-upper 90's since then. Unfortunately, there are no I.Q. data available for the earlier period of the school's academic excellence—the period during which the Ph.D.'s studied by H. M. Bond would have been high school students there. The present I.Q. scores—at about the national average, and therefore significantly above the average for black students—must be interpreted in the context of a city where private Catholic schools attract large numbers of both white and black students with higher educational aspirations and achievements. McDonough 35 median I.Q.'s have consistently been above the city-wide average for public school students—white and black—for the past decade.

The policies introduced in the mid-1950's which reversed McDonough 35's decline included keeping neighborhood derelicts out of the school, ability-grouping, or "tracking," to deal with the

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variation in student capabilities and interests, and a widening of school boundaries beyond the immediate neighborhood. Spears, a former football player, was perfect for keeping the derelicts out of the school—for even though he spoke softly, the big stick was implicit in his very presence. Instead of explaining away low test scores by "cultural deprivation" or dismissing them as "irrelevant," Spears used those scores to demonstrate to parents and to the black community the full depth of the problem and to get support for educational change, including ability-grouping to deal with the wide range of scores and a self-selection admissions system to supersede neighborhood boundaries.

All was not harmony in McDonough 35, even in its heyday. The internal class differences within the black community—which revolved around color differences going back to the era of slavery—were more pronounced in New Orleans, just as intra-group color differences in Latin cultures generally exceeded those in Anglo-Saxon cultures. However, light-skinned Negroes were *not* noticeably overrepresented among students, faculty, or administrators. And darker Negroes, such as Riles and Spears, were nevertheless accepted by the school, even though the larger community was divided socially along internal color lines.

Whites were, at best, a negligible factor in the development of McDonough 35 High School. According to former principal Spears, the all-white board of education "did not give a damn—and we took *advantage* of that to build academic excellence."

### New Orleans: St. Augustine High School

St. Augustine High School is a school for boys founded in 1951 by the Josephite Fathers. Its first principal was a young priest, Father Matthew O'Rourke, with neither experience nor training in education. Keenly aware of these gaps in his preparation, Father O'Rourke began a crash program, taking education courses at a local university—but found them "empty" and "a big zero." He and the other similarly inexperienced young priests and laymen on the faculty proceeded by trial and error—and dedication.

One of the first issues to arise came with the introduction of corporal punishment. In an era of growing racial sensitivities, some white priests outside the school were disturbed by the thought of white men (even in priestly garb) beating black youths. But Father O'Rourke and the other priests felt no guilt—the Josephite Order had been founded in the 19th century to serve blacks—and

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viewed the problem in purely pragmatic terms. Their options were to allow disruptive students to undo their work with others, to save the school by expelling such students, or to attempt to save both the students and the school by an occasional paddling. They elected to try the last. Despite the misgivings of some outside priests, the black parents backed the teachers completely, and the system worked. It has remained a feature of St. Augustine to the present—strongly believed in, but infrequently used. The student/teacher relations in St. Augustine are more relaxed and warm than in most public schools, where corporal punishment is usually forbidden by law.

The school was neither wedded to tradition nor seeking to be in the vanguard of "innovation." It did whatever worked educationally, and abandoned what did not. The wide range of student preparation led to ability-grouping, and to the jettisoning of the traditional English courses for the least prepared students in favor of an emphasis on reading, at virtually any cost. *Time* magazine was found to be an effective vocabulary tool for many students, and hundreds of St. Augustine students subscribed, at the urging of their teachers. A special summer course featured speed reading, with assignments of a novel per week, including reports.

The teachers' inexperience and lack of familiarity with educational fashions paid off handsomely. The first Southern Negro student to win a National Merit Scholarship came from St. Augustine. So did the first Presidential Scholar of any race from the state of Louisiana in 1964, and 10 years later, St. Augustine had produced 20 per cent of all the Presidential Scholars in the history of the state. In the National Achievement Scholarship program for black students, St. Augustine has produced more finalists and semi-finalists than any other school in the nation. In 1964—*before* the big college drive to enroll black students—St. Augustine's students won more than $100,000 in college scholarship money. This is all the more remarkable since the total enrollment is less than 700.

The pattern of I.Q. scores over time at St. Augustine shows a generally upward movement, beginning at a level very similar to the average for black students and reaching a level at or above that for the United States population as a whole. In its early years, St. Augustine had mean I.Q.'s as low as 86; but during the period from 1964 through 1972, I.Q.'s were just over 100 for every year except one.

The reasons for the rising I.Q.'s at St. Augustine cannot be easily determined. Father O'Rourke is reluctant to claim credit for the

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school itself. But in recalling his years as principal, he cited a number of instances where students with potential, but without cultural development, had improved after extra attention—improved not only on achievement tests, but also on I.Q. tests, "though that's not supposed to happen." Test scores were never used as a rigid admissions cutoff at St. Augustine. Our sample includes individual I.Q.'s in the 60's, as well as many others more than twice as high.

Father O'Rourke was succeeded as principal in 1960 by Father Robert H. Grant, one of the other young priests teaching at St. Augustine. Where Father O'Rourke had been universally liked, Father Grant tended to have both enthusiasts and detractors. Under Father Grant's administration, a heavy emphasis on academic achievement and tighter discipline brought Merit and Presidential scholars, school-wide I.Q.'s averaging over 100—and murmurs of discontent in the community. The discontented usually were *not* parents of students at St. Augustine. The rise of racial militancy raised questions about a white principal of a black school and brought demands for a "black" orientation of the curriculum. In retrospect, Father Grant describes his administration as "benignly autocratic" and himself as "blunt." "We didn't spend much time hassling, debating, or dialoguing." The teachers and principal had their meetings, but once an agreement had been reached, they did not "waste time" with "parent power" or "student rights," but relied instead on parental trust and on student achievement as a vindication of that trust. He met the demands for "black studies" by establishing an elective course on the subject—meeting at a time that was otherwise available as a study period. Only six students enrolled, out of more than 600 students in the school.

Although Father Grant fought a legal battle to integrate Louisiana's high school athletics, and was sympathetic to the civil rights movement in general, he was also opposed to the introduction of "extraneous elements, issues, and concerns" into the school itself. Keenly aware of both the students' cultural disadvantages and the need to overcome them, he felt that "we absolutely could not do the two things well," though both were important. It was a matter of time and priorities: "Don't consume my time with extraneous issues and then expect me to have enough time left over to dedicate myself to a strong academic program where I will turn out strong, intelligent, competent kids."

In 1969, Father Grant accepted a post in Switzerland and was replaced by a black lay principal—just what the doctor ordered politically, but apparently not administratively or educationally. He

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was replaced after a few years. The current principal, Leo A. Johnson, is also a black layman and, in addition, the first alumnus of St. Augustine to head the school. His term began in 1974, and it is too early to assess his impact on the school.

Teaching methods at St. Augustine are traditional, and both its academic and behavioral standards are strict. Students must wear "a dress shirt with a collar," and the shirttail "must be worn inside the trousers at all times." The general atmosphere at St. Augustine is relaxed, but serious. Its halls are quiet and its students are attentive and engrossed in what they are doing, as are the teachers. Yet it is not a wholly bookish place. Its athletic teams have won many local championships in football, basketball, and baseball. At lunch time, the students were as noisy as any other high school students, and the boys in the lunch room were visibly appreciative of a shapely young woman who was part of our research team. One of the real accomplishments of St. Augustine has been to give education a masculine image so that black youths need not consider intellectual activity "sissy."

The achievements of St. Augustine cannot be explained by the usual phrase of dismissal, "middle-class." Although it is a private school, its modest tuition ($645 per year) does not require affluence, and about 15 per cent of the students pay no tuition at all, while others pay reduced tuition because of their parents' low income. The school runs a chronic deficit, despite the low pay scale for those teachers who are clergy. Despite the color/caste history of New Orleans, the students at St. Augustine are physically indistinguishable from the students at any other black high school. Their demeanor and their work are *very* different, but their skin color is the same. Our statistical tabulation of parents' occupations covers only the years from 1951 through 1957, but in each year during that span more than half of the known parental occupations were in the "unskilled and semi-skilled" category, and the parents with professional or white-collar jobs added up to less than one tenth as many. While the students are seldom from the lowest poverty level, there is only occasionally the son of a doctor. Many come from families where the father is a bricklayer, carpenter, or other artisan, and has only a modest educational background. They are not middle-class in income, career security, culture, or lifestyle. Many are ambitious for their children and send them to school with attitudes that allow the education to "take." But such attitudes are not a monopoly of the middle class, despite sociological stereotyping. If such attitudes were in fact a monopoly of the

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middle class, neither blacks nor other ethnic minorities could ever have risen.

## New Orleans: Xavier Prep

Xavier Prep is an all-girl Catholic school run by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. It was founded in 1915, and was coeducational until 1970. It had 18 graduating seniors in 1918, and the enrollment increased to about 500 in 1940. It has about 350 students today, after the male students were phased out in the 1960's. Even when it was coeducational, it had more female than male students. One of the reasons for the difficulty of maintaining a masculine image for education among black youths is that, throughout the country and down through the years, Negro girls have outperformed Negro boys by a wide margin on grades, tests, and virtually every measure of intellectual ability. Studies of high I.Q. black students have consistently found the girls outnumbering the boys, by from two-to-one to more than five-to-one.

Over 90 per cent of the graduates of Xavier Prep go on to college. Until the 1960's, almost all went to Xavier University in New Orleans, run by the same order of nuns. Today about 60 per cent of the graduates go to either Xavier University, Loyola, or Tulane —all in New Orleans—even though their academic preparation would make them eligible for many other colleges and universities in other parts of the country.

I.Q. scores and other test scores vary considerably among Xavier students, but the average score of the school as a whole has fluctuated around the national norm—which is to say, higher than for Southerners of either race, higher than for black students nationally, and considerably higher than for black Southern children from the modest socioeconomic backgrounds of Xavier students. The mean I.Q. of the school as a whole ranged from 96 to 108 during the 1960's, and has been at or above 100 for each year surveyed during the 1970's.

In the earliest years of Xavier Prep, many of the students were from Creole backgrounds. But today the colors and conditions of the students represent a cross section of black America. Over the years, about 40 to 50 per cent of the students have come from low-income families, many entering with serious educational deficiencies, requiring remedial work. More than 60 per cent of its students are eligible for the free lunch program. While Xavier is a private school, its tuition is only $35 a month. Our statistical

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tabulation of parental occupation shows that from one half to four fifths of the parents' occupations have been in the "unskilled or semi-skilled" category, in the period from 1949 to 1972 for which we have data. Parents in professional or white-collar occupations put together added up to only seven per cent of the total during that same span. The principal, Sister Anne Louise Bechtold, recalls "one dentist" this year and "one lawyer last year" among the parents, but no engineers or college professors, and a small percentage of public school teachers—and otherwise parents of very modest socioeconomic backgrounds, with some of the mothers being domestics or store clerks and the fathers in similar occupations.

Unlike middle-class parents, the parents of Xavier students tend to be very cautious about their input into the school—even when invited and encouraged to participate. They seek discipline and an emphasis on basic education, and seem particularly pleased when their children's teachers are nuns. The caution of the parents is also a factor in the narrow range of colleges which most Xavier graduates attend. Ivy League and other Northern colleges attempt to recruit Xavier graduates, but the parents are reluctant to have their daughters exposed to strange influences in faraway colleges. In some cases, the teachers or counsellors fight a losing battle to get a promising student to accept an offer from a top-level college or university. This is not all the result of the limited cultural horizons of the parents. Economic pressures make it difficult for many of the parents to finance the travel involved, much less the living expenses, even if the student has a full scholarship.

Classes at Xavier Prep in the past tended to be large (35-40 students), but since boys were phased out in the mid-1960's, classes have been reduced to about 25 to 30 students. These students are "tracked" by academic ability. The less prepared students are given intensive and imaginative remedial work. Unlike St. Augustine, Xavier Prep has neither corporal punishment nor an emphasis on athletics. But the general atmosphere—described by one nun as "reserved but informal"—is very similar. Nuns and lay teachers are about equally represented on its faculty, and its principal is a nun. It is a quiet, low-key place where the changing of classes produces swarms of black teenagers in the halls, but little noise. The classes in session have students and teachers absorbed in mutual endeavor, but with a certain relaxed geniality. Discussions with Xavier teachers indicate that they put much thought and work, on their own time, into the preparation of their classes. Although subject to the guidance of superiors both inside and outside the school, the

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teachers seem to have more scope for personal initiative than do public school teachers. Among alumni of the school, their teachers' personal interest in them is a factor often cited as having given them the inspiration and self-confidence that came before the educational achievements themselves.

## Brooklyn: P.S. 91

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the schools in this study is P.S. 91, an elementary school in a rundown neighborhood of Brooklyn. Here, where over half the students are eligible for the free lunch program and a significant proportion are on welfare, *every grade approximates or (usually) exceeds the national norms* in reading comprehension. A tour of the ancient school building is even more surprising than these statistics. Here, in class after class, the students—overwhelmingly ghetto youngsters—work quietly, intently, and pleasantly under the direction of obviously intelligent and interested teachers and teacher aides who represent a wide range of ages, races, and personal styles. The sheer silence of the school was eerie to one who had attended elementary school in central Harlem and had recently researched similar schools elsewhere.

In class after class, discussion periods brought lively exchanges between teachers and pupils—the children speaking in complete sentences, gramatically and directly to the point, and returning to the subject if the teacher's response was not clear or satisfactory to them. To see this happening with children identical in appearance and dress to those who are dull, withdrawn, or hostile in untold other ghetto schools can only be described as an emotional experience. After leaving one classroom where a lively discussion was still in progress, the principal said matter-of-factly, "That was our slow learners' class. They are doing all right, but I think there is need for improvement."

That was the remarkable attitude of a remarkable man. Martin Shor, the principal, is white and was principal of the school when the school was white. As the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn changed its racial composition and the socioeconomic level fell, the school population reflected these changes. Now there are only a few white or oriental children in P.S. 91. But unlike other schools whose academic standards have fallen along with the socioeconomic level of their neighborhoods, P.S. 91 has had a *rising* proportion of its students scoring above the national norms in reading. In 1971, just over 49 per cent of its students exceeded the national

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norms, in 1972 it was 51 per cent, in 1973 it was 54 per cent, and in 1974 it was 57 per cent. To put these numbers in perspective, *none* of the 12 other schools in its district had even 40 per cent of their students above the national norms, even though some of these other schools are in higher-socioeconomic-status neighborhoods. The highest percentage in the whole borough of Brooklyn —with more than 600 elementary schools—is 60 per cent above the national norms.

The handicaps under which P.S. 91 operates include a very high turnover rate, characteristic of ghetto schools. There was a 34 per cent turnover in just three months. This means that the school loses many of the good students it has prepared in the early grades and receives from other ghetto schools badly prepared youngsters whom it must reeducate in later grades. This is apparently a factor in the pattern of scores whereby the lower grades at P.S. 91 exceed the national norms by wider margins than the higher grades (see the table below). However, it should be noted that other black schools in other cities also tend to score relatively higher in their earlier grades—sometimes even exceeding the national norms in the early grades, in schools far below the national norms overall. How much of the later disastrous decline in scores in ghetto schools is the result of high turnover and how much is the result of the negative effects of the school itself, or the development of negative attitudes by the students toward the school (or life), is a subject which has scarcely been explored. Indeed, the phenomenon itself has hardly been recognized. It is well known that black children tend to fall progressively further behind as they go through school systems, but just how well they do in the first or second grades—even in school systems with dreadful overall results, such as in Chicago or Philadelphia—is a largely unrecognized phenomena.

Martin Shor puts heavy emphasis on teaching the P.S. 91 pupils to read well in the first grade. Indeed, half of the P.S. 91 children can read when they have finished kindergarten. While the school

*Reading Scores, P.S. 91, Brooklyn* [1]

| Grade | National Norms | P.S. 91 Median |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 2.7 | 3.5 |
| 3 | 3.7 | 4.1 |
| 4 | 4.7 | 4.5 |
| 5 | 5.7 | 6.3 |
| 6 | 6.7 | 6.7 |

[1] Source: Compilation from District 17, Brooklyn.

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bears the imprint of his own special methods and approach, Shor argues that none of these methods would work unless the students first knew how to read. A disproportionate amount of the school's money and teaching talent goes into preparing the first-graders to read, write, and express themselves orally.

The higher grades use a variety of self-teaching materials, including programmed books, teaching machines, and tape recorders. Many of these materials are *a year or more ahead* of the "age" or "grade" level of the students using them. Students are separated into small groups by ability within each class as well as between classes, and each group has its own assignment. "This may look like an 'open' classroom," Shor said. "But it's not. Every group is working on its own *assigned* task." When asked if this "tracking" system did not originally lead to certain racial imbalances in classes within the school, Shor pointed out that initially disadvantaged students advanced enough to produce more racial balance eventually.

"But if other schools followed your system," I asked, "wouldn't that mean that, in the interim, a multi-racial school would have the appearance of internal segregation, which would lead to a lot of political flack?" "Then you just take the flack," he said. He had taken flack during the period of racial transition at P.S. 91, but the educational results silenced critics and gained parental support. How many other white principals in a ghetto neighborhood have that kind of courage is another question. A study of unusually successful ghetto schools by the Office of Educational Personnel Review in New York concluded that "the quality and attitude of the administrator seemed to be the only real difference" between these schools and less successful ones. A few hours with Martin Shor reinforce that conclusion. He is a quietly confident, forceful man, with an incisive mind, much experience and resourcefulness, and the implicit faith that the job *can* be done. His talk is free of the educational clichés and public relations smoothness normally associated with school administrators. He comes to the ghetto to do a job, does it well, and then goes home elsewhere—contrary to the emotional cries about the need for indigenous community leadership in the school.

P.S. 91 does not teach "black English" or black studies, though its many books and other materials do include a few items of special interest to black children. The school tries to *expand* the students' cultural horizons: Several hundred of these elementary school pupils study foreign languages. P.S. 91 students also read excerpts from translations of the classics of world literature, such as Cer-

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vantes or Aesop. They are constantly exposed to material that allows their minds to see beyond the drab school building, the decaying tenements, and the area that caused a friend to tell me, "You sure are brave to park a car in *that* neighborhood." The usual "middle-class" label used to dismiss black educational achievements is only a bad joke when applied to P.S. 91.

### Washington, D.C.: Dunbar High School

The oldest and most illustrious of the black elite schools was Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., during the period from 1870 to 1955. Over that 85-year span, most of its graduates went to college—rare for whites or blacks, then—and many went on to outstanding academic achievements and distinguished careers. Back at the turn of the century, Dunbar was sending students to Harvard, and in the period 1918-1923, Dunbar graduates earned 15 degrees from Ivy League colleges, and 10 degrees from Amherst, Williams, and Wesleyan. During World War II, Dunbar alumni in the Army included "nearly a score of Majors, nine Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels, and a Brigadier General"—a substantial percentage of all high-ranking black officers at that time.

Dunbar was the first black public high school in the United States. Its unique position allowed it to select some of the best of the educated blacks in the country for its teachers and principals. Of its first nine principals, seven had degrees from either Harvard, Oberlin, Dartmouth, or Amherst. Of the remaining two, one was educated in Glasgow and London, and the other was a Phi Beta Kappa from Western Reserve. The principals included the first black woman in the United States to receive a college degree (from Oberlin, 1862) and the first black man to graduate from Harvard (in 1870). Clearly they were remarkable people even to attempt what they did, when they did.

So too was the man who spearheaded the drive that led to the founding of the school which ultimately became Dunbar High School (after several changes of name and location). William Syphax was a "free person of color," born in 1826 and active in civic affairs and civil rights issues, "fearing no man regardless of position or color." As a trustee of the Negro schools in Washington, Syphax preferred to hire black teachers, but only when their qualifications were equal to those of white teachers—for the trustees "deem it a violation of our official oath to employ inferior teachers when superior teachers can be had for the same money." He

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addressed demands not only to whites in power, but also to his own people, exhorting them to send their children to school with discipline, respect, and a willingness to work hard. These became hallmarks of Dunbar High School, as did the academic success that flowed from them. As early as 1899, Dunbar scored higher in city-wide tests than any of the white high schools in the District of Columbia. Down through the years its attendance records were generally better than those of the white high schools, and its rate of tardiness was lower. Dunbar meant business.

The teachers at Dunbar usually held degrees in liberal arts from top institutions, not education degrees from teachers colleges. The scarcity of alternative occupations for educated Negroes allowed Dunbar to pick the cream of the crop. As late as the 1920's, its staff included individuals with Ph.D.'s from leading universities, including the distinguished historian Carter G. Woodson. The teachers were as dedicated and demanding as they were qualified. Extra-curricular tutoring, securing scholarships for graduating seniors, getting parents of promising students to keep them in school despite desperate family finances—all these were part of the voluntary work load of Dunbar teachers and principals. In a city that remained racially segregated into the 1950's, there were also constant efforts to bring cultural attractions to the school that were unavailable to black youngsters in theaters, concert halls, or other cultural and entertainment centers. While individual pride and racial awareness were part of the atmosphere at Dunbar High School, cultural expansion was the educational goal. Latin was taught throughout the period from 1870 to 1955, and in the early decades, Greek was taught as well. In the 1940's, Dunbar fought a losing battle with the superintendent of schools to have calculus added.

Throughout the 85-year period of its academic ascendancy, Dunbar never had adequate financial support. At its founding it was allowed to draw only on taxes collected in the black community. While this arrangement eventually gave way to drawing on the general taxes of the city, so too did the separate administration of Negro schools by black trustees give way to city-wide administration by an all-white board of education, which never provided equal support. Large classes were the norm from the 1870's, when there were more than 40 students per teacher, to the 1950's, when Dunbar's student/teacher ratio exceeded that of any white high school in Washington. The school was in operation more than 40 years before it had a lunch room, which then was so small that many children had to eat lunch out on the street. Blackboards were

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"cracked with confusing lines resembling a map." It was 1950 before the school had a public address system.

The social origins of Dunbar students were diverse. For three decades, Dunbar was the only black high school in Washington, D.C., and for three more decades it was the only black academic high school in the city, so it drew on a broad cross section of students. As late as 1948, one third of all black high school students in Washington were enrolled in Dunbar. Nevertheless, the "middle-class" label has been stuck on Dunbar, and no amount of facts dispels it. According to a *Washington Post* reporter, the one word "Dunbar" will divide any room of middle-aged black Washingtonians into "outraged warring factions." Some are fiercely loyal to Dunbar as a monumental educational achievement, while others see it as snobbish elitism for middle-class mulattoes who either excluded poor blacks from the school or ostracized them if they attended. A look through old yearbook photographs will disprove the myth of mulatto predominance, and our statistical tabulation of parental occupations from 1938 through 1955 shows 38 per cent of known parental occupations to have been "unskilled and semi-skilled" (including many maids), while "white-collar" and "professional" occupations together added up to only 17 per cent.

Unquestionably, almost all middle-class Negroes in Washington sent their children to Dunbar during the period from 1870 to 1955, and for historical reasons, middle-class Negroes tended to be lighter in color—but that is very different from saying that most Dunbar students were either middle class or mulattoes. Former Dunbar Principal Charles Lofton calls it all "an old wives' tale." "If we took only the children of doctors and lawyers," he asked, "how could we have had 1400 black students at one time?" Yet the persistence and power of the myth suggests something of the depth of the hurt felt by those who either did not go to Dunbar because of fear of social rejection or did go and did not feel accepted. To this day, one Dunbar alumna has a policy at social gatherings in Washington of never mentioning where she went to high school.

Dunbar alumni claim that the school was at its academic peak in the 1920's or earlier—in particular that the "M Street School," which was the name prior to 1917, was superior to "Dunbar," which was the name attached to the building constructed that year. There is some inconclusive evidence—graduation years of distinguished alumni, numbers of graduates attending top colleges, etc.—supporting this view, but no standard tests were given in both eras that would permit a direct comparison. The earliest I.Q. records

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available are for 1938, so that our data cover only its supposedly declining years. Nonetheless, for this 18-year period, the average I.Q. in the school was below 100 for only one year (when it was 99) and was as high as 111 (in 1939).

There is general agreement that Dunbar declined precipitously and catastrophically after the school reorganization of 1955 made it a neighborhood school for the first time in its history. Its neighborhood was one of the worst in the city, and as its new students entered, advanced elective courses gave way to remedial math and English, and its quiet building now became the scene of "discipline problems." The past excellence of the school had caused many teachers to stay on past the retirement age, and now many of them began to retire at once. By the 1960's a newspaper story on the school was titled "Black Elite Institution Now Typical Slum Facility." It remains a typical slum school today—its past recalled only in the heat of a bitter controversy over the tearing down of the old building standing alongside a modern school bearing the same name. One of several city councilmen who favored demolition said that Dunbar "represents a symbol of elitism among blacks that should never appear again." But a Dunbar alumnus wondered if the real problem was that the new school fears the "silent competition" of the old building and the achievement it represents.

## Educational "law and order"

Contrary to current fashions, it has not been necessary (or usual) to have a special method of teaching to "reach" black children in order to have high-quality education. Teaching methods used in the schools studied here have varied enormously from school to school, and even in particular schools the variation from teacher to teacher has been so great as to defy general characterization. Everything from religious principles to corporal punishment has been used to maintain order. The buildings have ranged from the most dilapidated wrecks to a sparkling plate-glass palace. The teachers and principals have been black and white, religious and secular, authoritarian and gentle, community leaders and visitors from another social world. Some have had a warm "human touch" and others would have failed Public Relations I. Their only common denominators have been dedication to education, commitment to the children, and faith in what it was possible to achieve. The institutional common denominators of these schools are a larger and more complex question.

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In general, test scores have been significantly higher at these schools than at black schools in general, and have been highest at the most elite and oldest—Dunbar High School in Washington, in its academic heyday. Yet their I.Q. scores have not been as high as those at white high schools of comparable achievement, and all of the schools studied have included students well below national test score norms. In short, test scores are not "irrelevant" for black achievement, but neither are they the be-all and end-all. One of the tragedies in the wake of the Jensen controversy is that many schools and school systems avoid giving I.Q. tests for fear of political repercussions, when in fact much useful information can be obtained from this imperfect instrument, once its limitations are understood. Even where I.Q. tests are used, the results are often handled in a politicized way. For example, the Austin (Texas) public school system refused to release data on a school being considered for inclusion in this study because of "legal" reasons—but only after a lengthy cross-examination on my personal beliefs about various issues involved in the I.Q. controversy. Sometimes the data are suppressed for more directly institutional political reasons—as in the case of a large metropolitan black school on the West Coast whose outstanding performance is kept quiet for fear of citizen demands to know why the other black schools in the same city cannot produce similar results.

Perhaps the most basic characteristic of all these schools could be called "law and order," if these had not become politically dirty words. Each of these schools currently maintaining high standards was a very quiet and orderly school, whether located in a middle-class suburb of Atlanta or in the heart of a deteriorating ghetto in Brooklyn. Schools formerly of high quality were repeatedly described by alumni, teachers, and others as places where "discipline problems" were virtually unheard-of. "Respect" was the word most used by those interviewed to describe the attitudes of students and parents toward these schools. "The teacher was *always* right" was a phrase that was used again and again to describe the attitude of the black parents of a generation or more ago. Most Negro students of that era would not have dreamed of complaining to their parents after being punished by a teacher, for that would have been likely to bring on a second—and worse—punishment at home. Even today, in those few instances where schools have the confidence of black parents, a wise student maintains a discreet silence at home about his difficulties with teachers, and hopes that the teachers do the same. The black culture is not a permissive cul-

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ture. But in more and more cases, "student rights" activists among adults—particularly adults with an eye to political exposure—create a more contentious environment in which it is the teacher or the principal who maintains a discreet silence for fear of legal or physical retaliation. The sheer exhaustion of going through "due process" for every disruptive student who needs to be suspended is enough to discourage decisive action by many school officials.

The destruction of high-quality black schools has been associated with a breakdown in the basic framework of law and order. Nor did it require mass violence to destroy these or other black schools. Again and again those interviewed who were working in the field of education pointed out that only a fraction—perhaps no more than one tenth of the students—need to be hard-core troublemakers in order for good education to become impossible. Another way of looking at this is that only a small amount of initial selectivity (including student self-selection) or subsequent ability to suspend or expel is necessary to free a school of a major obstacle to education. At one time this small amount of selectivity was provided automatically for black (and other) high schools, because most uninterested students did not go on to high school. Those whose educational performances were substandard in the lower grades were left back often enough to reach the age to leave school before reaching high school. Moreover, that legal age was lower then; and, in addition, those utterly uninterested in school were unlikely to be zealously pursued by attendance officers in the era before the "dropout" problem became an emotionally important political issue.

Formal selectivity, in terms of entrance examination cutoff scores, was the exception rather than the rule for the schools studied here. Most of these were public schools serving all students in a given area; and for some period of their history, that area has included all black children in the city, in the cases of Dunbar, Douglass, and Booker T. Washington High Schools. The private schools—St. Augustine, Xavier, and St. Paul—have entrance examinations, but these do not automatically admit or exclude, and the wide range of student test scores in these schools indicates that such scores are far from decisive in admissions. In short, no stringent "elitism" is necessary to achieve high-quality education. It is only necessary to select, or have students self-select, in such a way as to exclude the tiny fraction who are troublemakers.

At one time, it was a relatively simple matter to suspend, expel, or transfer a disruptive student to some "special" class or "dumping ground" vocational school, allowing the rest of the edu-

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cational system to proceed undisturbed. Now this has become more difficult with the growth of "student rights" and "parent power"—and, more generally, with an agonizing preoccupation with the question of what can be done for the disruptive student to "solve" his "problem." This mass projection of the academic paradigm of problem-solving to the whole society is part of the general spirit of the times, but it overlooks the vital question whether there is, in fact, a solution—whether we have it within our grasp today, and whether we shall allow the "problem" to take its fullest destructive toll before such indefinite time as we have it "solved." Recent campaigns to "get the drunk driver off the road" suggest that there are cases where the primary concern is to protect society, and where whatever remedies can be offered the individual are secondary. The enormous toll of a few destructive students on black education is one of the tragic untold stories of our time—perhaps because there is no political gain to be made by telling it, and much political capital to reap from championing "student rights."

## Recovering the past

While order and respect have been universal characteristics of the schools studied here, other ingredients have also been necessary to create academic excellence. Chief among these have been the character and ability of the principals. Some of these principals have been of heroic dimensions—fighters for civil rights at a time when that was a dangerous role—and others have been simply dedicated educators. The number of these principals who have trained at top colleges and universities in the country suggests that investments made in promising Negro youths more than half a century ago have paid off large and continuing dividends.

Ability grouping has been a prominent feature of most of these schools during their periods of academic excellence—contrary to the "democratic" trends in contemporary education. For many reasons going back into history, there are very wide ranges of educational preparation and orientation among black children, and accommodating them all in one standard curriculum may often be impractical. Among Dunbar students in the period from 1938 to 1955, it was not uncommon to find individuals with I.Q.'s in the 80's and individuals with I.Q.'s in the 140's in the same grade. In P.S. 91 today, the ability-grouping principle includes not only several different classes in the same grade but also several different ability groupings within each class—all told, perhaps two dozen ability lev-

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els in a single grade. This may not sound plausible as an educational policy, but it works—and it works in an unpromising social setting where many more popular ideas fail to show any results.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of contemporary education is the extent to which the very process of testing ideas and procedures by their actual *results* has been superseded by a process of testing them by their consonance with existing *preconceptions* about education and society. Father Grant, even after his remarkable successes as principal of St. Augustine, found no receptivity at the Ford Foundation either to his appeals for money for the school or to his ideas about education. He was out of step with the rhetoric of his time and did not use the "innovative" methods that were preconceived to be necessary or beneficial to black students. Xavier Prep, even after more than half a century of demonstrable results, is still looking for a modest sum of money to improve its library, but libraries are not "exciting" or "imaginative"—as "black English" or "black studies" are.

The social settings of the schools studied here are also significant. Every one of them was an urban school. This is remarkable because during the academic heyday of most of these schools most American Negroes lived in rural and small-town settings. This suggests that the rise of such prominent blacks as those who came from these schools—which is to say, most of the top black pioneers in the history of this country—seems a matter less of innate ability and more of special social settings in which individual ability could develop; and that the settings from which such black leadership arose were quite different from the social settings in which the mass of the black population lived. The second point needs emphasis only because of the recent mystique surrounding "grass roots" origins and/or the faithful reflection of "grass roots" attitudes by leaders. Much of this is nothing more than brazen presumption and reckless semantics: No one ever applies labels like "middle-class" to Angela Davis or LeRoi Jones (or others of their persuasion), though that is in fact their origin, while those with a more moderate philosophy are often condemned as "middle-class" —no matter that they may actually have come from desperate poverty, and no matter how many polls show that their opinions are shared by the masses of blacks.

The particular cities in which the high-quality black schools arose were distinctive as centers of concentration for the "free persons of color" in the antebellum era. Except in the case of Dunbar High School in Washington, there was no unbroken historical line trace-

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able back to the free Negroes of the early 19th century, but it seems more than coincidence that these schools took root in places where there had been schools for black children (usually private schools) 50 or 100 years earlier. That is, an old black community with a demand for good education existed even before good schools became an institutional reality. It is not that the bulk of the Negroes in these cities necessarily wanted quality education, but that there was an important nucleus that understood what was needed, and that the others recognized and respected good education when it appeared.

Apparently the great bulk of black children who benefited from these schools were *not* descendants of "free persons of color" or of middle-class Negroes in general. But the knowledge, experience, and values of the more fortunate segment of the race became their heritage. While the black educated classes were not angels—they could be as snobbish and insufferable as any other privileged group—they were a vital source of knowledge, discipline, and competence. They opened a window on a wider world of human history and culture. They did not glorify provincialism or tribalism, in the manner of some of today's black middle-class radicals who attempt to expiate their own past by being "blacker-than-thou." Those white officials who have successfully run high-quality black schools have, without exception, been men and women who were neither impressed nor intimidated by the militant vogues of the 1960's.

Whatever is the objective importance of social history in any final assessment of black education, that history must be dealt with—if only to counter the *fictitious* history that has become part of current stereotypes. Messianic movements of whatever place or time tend to denigrate the past as a means of making themselves unique and their vision glorious. Recent black messianic movements, and white messianic movements speaking in the name of blacks, have been no exception. The picture that emerges from these visions is of an inert, fearful, and unconcerned black leadership in the past—leaders only recently superseded by bold men of vision, like themselves. This is a libel on the men and women who faced up to far more serious dangers than our generation will ever confront, who took the children of slaves and made them educated men and women, and who put in the long hours of hard work required to turn a despised mass into a cohesive community. In many ways, those communities had far more cohesion, stability, mutual respect, and plain humanity than the ghettos of today.

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# Report from Chicago: a program that works

J. S. FUERST

AMERICA'S cities are becoming battlefields and no man's lands because of the problems of race and education. Legislatures and courts are increasingly preoccupied with civil rights, busing, and tax and budgetary problems as more middle-income families move out of the city, while the poor remain. Combinations of racial minorities are beginning to dominate large urban areas, with enormous political and economic consequences. For the foreseeable future, there seems no way to alter this trend toward limited *de facto* apartheid.

At the same time, because of the legal and ethical imperatives of the *Brown* decision that "separate cannot be equal" in education, the possibility of improving the education of minorities in the face of increasing racial separation seems indeed remote. This pessimism is not relieved by reports that, up to now, improvements in educational facilities have not substantially improved the educational performance of black children.

In the light of this apparent stalemate, the recent experiences of some Chicago public schools offer amazing cause for optimism. After students were exposed to a concentrated reading program called DISTAR (Direct Instructional Systems in Training for Arithmetic and Reading), performance on achievement tests rose dramatically.

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The DISTAR method has been defined as "verbal bombardment," with the teacher maintaining a steady stream of questions and comments, cramming an extraordinary amount of teacher-directed verbal experience into each class session. It involves carefully structured lessons which include problems, demonstrations, and drill exercises. There is a special emphasis on alphabet drills, phonetics, and the development of the awareness of words as distinct entities. Children continue to be rewarded, however, for disciplined behavior and the proper presentation of academic material. The complexity of language concepts is increased as the child's verbal ability develops. It is this combination of factors that seems to produce dramatic growth in reading achievement.[1]

The DISTAR program is used most extensively in Chicago's District 10, which covers Lawndale, one of the most deteriorated areas of the city. It is used in selected schools elsewhere in the city, mostly in other deteriorated areas, and also in five "child/parent centers" (CPC's) most of which have classes from pre-kindergarten through third grade (and sometimes higher).

In all second-grade classes in District 10, with a total of 1,470 children exposed to DISTAR, mean reading scores were 2.6 in 1974—higher than the city-wide mean of 2.5, and 30 per cent higher than the inner-city mean.[2] In 1975, the most recently published average in District 10 was 2.7—even higher than the 1974 average. At the Burns Branch School in Lawndale, where the enrollment is 95 per cent Hispanic, the reading scores in the second grade averaged 3.2. Similarly, at the Aldridge and Hughes schools, which serve very low-income black families living in housing projects, the second-grade averages were 2.7 and 3.0, respectively.

Harriet Garfield, who has used DISTAR for six years at the Einstein School, which serves another highly deteriorated inner-city neighborhood, found that even when she was assigned to children accorded the poorest probability of success as first graders, after two years of exposure to DISTAR, 47 per cent of her children were reading at grade level—compared with 16 per cent of the children with higher I.Q. scores in the same grade and the same school who

[1] To understand the success of DISTAR, it is important to know the related teaching strategy, which involves adhering to rigid repetitive patterns; eliciting unison responses whenever possible; never concentrating on any one child in a group for more than 30 seconds; phrasing statements rhythmically; never hurrying children; asking questions liberally; giving short explanations with numerous examples, tailored to what the child knows; using stories to dramatize learning; and providing positive reinforcement, by praising correct responses.

[2] Reading tests are given to second-graders in the eighth month of the 10-month school year. Thus the expected standard score is 2.8.

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were not exposed to DISTAR. Mrs. Garfield, however, makes the point that "to fully utilize DISTAR, smaller classes than the 30-child average in the system plus paraprofessional workers or helpers are advisable." Some results can be obtained otherwise, but they will be less than those of a fully developed program, such as is found in the five CPC's.

## Objections and alternatives

One of the major valid criticisms of many educational experiments is that they do not cover enough children to provide reliable and repeatable results. This is not true of DISTAR, thanks in large part to Joseph Rosen, the outstanding District 10 Superintendent who has promoted the program with enormous perseverance and care. In Lawndale, 6,000 children—all the children from kindergarten through third grade—are exposed to the program, many for a number of years; and the CPC's, which serve 800 to 1,000 children, are also concentrated in this area. The Chicago Board of Education, on a smaller scale, has recently opened 19 more CPC's for a total of 3,300 children in several other areas, and has used DISTAR without these CPC's for an additional 2,000 children outside Lawndale.

In any experiment a basic question is the nature of the universe in which the study is conducted—in this case, just what was the condition of Lawndale, the major site of the DISTAR "experiment" in Chicago? Some social indices of the area served by District 10 are as follows: Lawndale is next to the lowest of the 75 community areas in Chicago in terms of 1970 family annual income; the lowest in terms of "dollar amount of building in five years" and the highest in number of abandoned buildings; the fifth highest in the number of housing violations; the ninth highest in the number of fires; the sixth highest in the rate of infant mortality; and the fifth highest in the rate of juvenile delinquency. This is not a recent development. In 1960 a ranking of suburban and city community areas by socioeconomic status showed Lawndale to be the 244th out of 250 in the Chicago area.

Even with the apparently good results of the program in such a seriously disadvantaged area, there is another basic question: What do the teachers who administer the program think about it? Without the support of teachers and principals, no program will work. In spite of Harriet Garfield and the many others who share her opinion, teachers are by no means unanimously happy with DIS-

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TAR. As may be inferred from the teaching technique described above, the program involves an enormous amount of work for individual teachers, given the need for almost continuous positive reinforcement of the children. At the end of a day, many teachers are exhausted. Furthermore, because of the structured nature of the program, it is said that there are few creative possibilities and few opportunities for improvisation.

There are schools that have tried and discarded DISTAR because the existing habits of teaching were so ingrained that no new system, particularly one so highly structured, could work; or because the leadership and the staff could not accept the discipline and "follow through" which are demanded for success in this program. Another reason given fairly frequently for rejection of the program is that there is too much pressure placed upon young children. An infrequently stated objection that seems to underlie many of the rejections of DISTAR is that each teacher and principal is accountable for results which are fairly easily checked, and many teachers resent this as an affront to their professionalism. In spite of these objections, however, of the teachers polled in the Chicago schools where the program is implemented, 75 per cent believed that "it works and should be continued and expanded."

Critics of the program have said that the program has too much academic orientation and have described DISTAR as the "child-as-Pavlov's-dog" experiment. It has been said that while the program stresses academic and basic thinking skills, it ignores social and psychological factors that influence the development of the child. Further, it is said that because the methodology emphasizes drill, it does not encourage children to raise relevant questions, and that schooling is treated as separate from life. Perhaps the most trenchant criticism in the eyes of some radical critics (but the very criticism which should make the program most appealing to the education establishment) is that DISTAR, with its mechanistic approach, essentially accepts the institution of the school as it is, without questioning its basic values or structure.

Some skeptics suggest that there still is not enough hard evidence that the program actually works. It is suggested that perhaps the reading tests are too close to the DISTAR method itself, so that the instruction is in fact a prepared rehearsal for the reading tests, without providing any lasting effects. This is belied by the fact that the reading test results are supported by general I.Q. test results,[3]

[3] Psychological tests given to children before and after exposure to DISTAR showed an apparent eight to 10 per cent rise in I.Q. scores.

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and the fact that the skills DISTAR teaches are the basic skills of written and verbal understanding and communication. These are essential skills not only in high school and college but in industrial and commercial jobs, and to acquire these skills alone is an enormous gain.

Is DISTAR better than alternative programs? Principals who use DISTAR themselves point out that while DISTAR is of great value in the first grades, auxiliary reading programs are uniformly phased in later. Certainly there are other programs which have substantially increased reading scores merely through a total reworking of school methods, as reported in *Phi Delta Kappan* (February 1971): at P.S. 146 in New York City, under Principal Seymour Fliegel, and at P.S. 20 in New York City, under Principal Richard Lonoff. Some of the elements in these programs are close supervision of teacher-child relationships, small classes, close parental involvement, etc. However, these programs do seem to have extraordinarily dedicated principals and carefully selected and equally dedicated staffs—not easily replicable elsewhere. The Perry preschool project, developed at Ypsilanti, Michigan, by Dan Weikart and his associates, involves a basic skill-oriented program based largely on Piaget's theories, and seems to have produced some good results for school children on a small scale. However, as Ornstein, Wilkerson, and Levine point out in their excellent summary of such programs in *Reforming Metropolitan Schools*, "thus far the predominating findings of research evaluation of compensatory education do not bolster confidence that most of the special programs reported can substantially improve the academic performance of the poor." While the authors spoke very well of the Bereiter-Engleman method (later developed into the DISTAR program) as it had been reported on in the literature, they believed that the extent of the experiment using this method was not great enough to give it unqualified support at that time.

Many educators in upper-class and middle-class schools also claim that DISTAR is probably not applicable to some children, particularly those from middle-income or high-income groups where parental involvement is already great and reading skills are well developed. But the experiences at Ogden, the pilot school for DISTAR in Chicago, tell a slightly different story. The student population of this school is 75-80 per cent white, with a healthy mix of children from both Chicago's "Gold Coast" and the deteriorated housing areas nearby. The reading scores of Ogden second graders who have been exposed to DISTAR average 4.1. In four schools in the

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highest-income section of Chicago, the average score for second graders was 3.9. It is no wonder, then, that many of the Ogden parents, who are among Chicago's highest-income group, say that they could easily afford to send their children to private schools but prefer Ogden, with its DISTAR program.

That DISTAR works well can hardly be doubted: The differences between the reading scores of children using DISTAR for a protracted period and those of other national or local control groups hold reasonably steady. On the other hand, because of apathy and a general resistance to change and because the use of DISTAR requires the full cooperation of faculty, occasionally failures do occur. Furthermore, with a normal class load, no other changes in the program, and the use of DISTAR continuously from kindergarten through the third grade, the results, while steady, are not startling.

### The "child/parent center" programs

What can be accomplished with a total program combining DISTAR with parental participation? Since 1967, such extensive programs have been carried out in the CPC's. Children begin these programs at age three, and the classes average only 20 to 25 children. The teachers rotate, teaching six or seven children in a group while other children use workbooks, supervised by mothers or paraprofessionals. Extensive programs of parental involvement are conducted outside the classroom, but in the school.

In the five CPC's—at Cole, Dickens, Hansberry, Olive, and Wheatley schools—second-grade reading test scores in 1974 were dramatically high: 3.1 in these CPC's—compared with 2.5 city-wide and 2.8 nationally. The averages for the CPC at Olive School, where there has been a continuous program for six years under an extraordinary principal, Betsy Clayton, are even more remarkable—3.5 for second graders and 6.9 for sixth graders.[4] The average of all five CPC's is much higher than the 2.0 average score of second-grade black children in inner-city Chicago schools. (Many of these schools have averages of 1.6 and 1.7). The children in these CPC's were all black, but the faculty was 60 per cent white—an extremely signifi-

[4] At Olive School, children continue the program through the sixth grade, although the programs at many other CPC's go only as far as third grade. The Olive School program is operated out of a group of prefabricated buildings; and the lack of physical amenities, together with high test scores, is particularly striking in contrast to the enormous expenditures on physical plants in Chicago and elsewhere, with no significant improvement in test scores.

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cant fact at a time when some black groups are claiming the necessity for a predominantly black faculty to achieve good results.[5]

One may ask, concerning these CPC results, how the children were selected. Parents and children enrolled on a first-come, first-served basis. While this in itself has an element of selectivity—those parents who were more interested would apply first—interviews with a number of parents and teachers make it clear that this should not be overstressed. In cases where applications were in excess of available spaces in the program, an evaluation was made to give preference to children with greater demonstrated need. Moreover, when the program was directed toward children with serious learning problems, or greater general need, the results were equally impressive.

In discussing the CPC program, critics are quick to argue that the large array of services, rather than the DISTAR method, accounts for the substantial gains. While Betsy Clayton and Debra Gordon, both principals of CPC schools, agree that the extensive service program of the CPC's is extremely helpful in producing significant advances, they give a considerable amount of the credit to the DISTAR program. As Dr. Benjamin Bloom, the eminent authority on early childhood education, argues, the CPC's provide a clear indication of how well children can do when training and auxiliary services begin early enough and continue for a number of years.

Furthermore, even the most cursory examination of the DISTAR program as conducted in the CPC's dispels the notion that the program discourages creativity. The many independent spirits who operate within the framework imposed by DISTAR indicate that innovation and creativity can be infused into the discipline by gifted teachers. Certainly, in the program I witnessed at the Olive School, there seemed to be little, if any, barrenness or rigidity, and there was considerable personal interplay among teachers, parents, and pupils. On the other hand, though, some say that it is this very creativity of dedicated teachers and staff at CPC's which makes the difference in test results and that DISTAR plays little

[5] The stories of the individuals involved offer the most compelling testimony to the success of the program. At Olive School, the successes are so numerous that it is difficult to choose the stories which best illustrate the enormous promise of DISTAR. Some examples: two mentally-handicapped girls, from a problem family, who are now reading at grade level; a boy, previously identified as a potential delinquent, who is now reading ahead of his grade level; a chronically ill boy who had missed a great deal of school but now performs better than his older sister, who attends a regular school and had not been handicapped by illness; and a seven-year-old girl who has advanced farther than her three older sisters, who all attend parochial schools.

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part—thus ignoring the success reported in the schools with DISTAR and no CPC's. Participants in the program freely admit that it can be affected by the haphazard selection of staff or by an uninterested principal.

Other critics argue that with gifted or well-trained teachers, no special program is necessary, providing that class size is maintained at such a level that the teacher can manage to give individual instruction. For example, at the Farren School, which receives Title I funds and serves the children in the Robert Taylor Housing Project, the reading level of one class has been raised by several levels above the national norm by a sixth-grade teacher, Joseph Adamic, who had continued with the class for three years without DISTAR or any other special program. However, this teacher was "one of the finest" his principal, Yale Williams, had ever observed. But, even with a teacher as gifted as Adamic, the average reading score of all the children in the second grade in the Farren School was 2.1, only slightly above that of the children in the inner city. Furthermore, as Wayne Hoffman, the principal of the CPC at Cole School, has indicated, the one outstanding characteristic of DISTAR (both in and out of the CPC's) is that it can be administered by teachers of average caliber and little experience, providing they are given supervision and follow instructions.

A key question is what will happen to children after they have finished DISTAR and have been "mainstreamed" into regular school classes. There is some evidence from Olive School that the gains continue. When comparisons are made between second-grade and eighth-grade performance, it must be remembered that among most black children in the later grades of elementary school there is generally a marked fall-off by the eighth grade: Many black children are then reading at only fourth-grade to sixth-grade level, two to four years behind the norm. In contrast, according to Jack Stenner, one of the outside consultants hired by the city to evaluate the various educational methods funded under the Title I in the Chicago school system, "a small group of four-year 'graduates' of Child Parent Centers was located at Hughes School. These CPC students as a group continued to progress in reading scores one month for each month of school in accordance with national norms." Projecting these grades through grade eight would place the CPC graduates at least two full grade levels over their peers. In a recent follow-up study, Stenner found that DISTAR-trained CPC students who are "mainstreamed" tend to average losses of only one month per year of school, so that, on the whole, they maintain grade lev-

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els.[6] Similarly, the reading scores of 14 Ogden eighth graders who had been exposed to a three-year program of DISTAR some five or six years previously averaged 1.9 years above the norm for their grade.

## The costs of success

The most immediate obstacle to extensive use of DISTAR is the cost of programs of this type. Actually, however, the cost of the DISTAR program varies. If it is used only in kindergarten and the first through third grades, and if money is appropriated for preliminary training of the teachers and for the few supervisors needed on a continuing basis, plus the cost of the DISTAR instructional material, the total cost of DISTAR should be less than five per cent over the average cost per child in the regular school system. This is for DISTAR alone, and does not include reduction in class size. On the other hand, at the present time the cost per child for Chicago's CPC's is virtually double the cost per child, kindergarten through third grade, in the regular public school. This extra amount is paid by the federal government. Less extensive changes can produce less and will cost less.

In an article in *Phi Delta Kappan* (December 1973), Stenner explained that the cost of a CPC program was $2,300 per year for the first five years. However the combined cost of a CPC-trained child who is "mainstreamed" from the fourth grade on (with the cost for the first five years, including kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, figured at $2300 per year, and the remaining years at approximately $1000 per year) is only $1760 per year. By contrast, a youngster receiving Title I aid for his total school life (which is the practice in many inner-city schools where there are no CPC's or DISTAR) would cost the community $1850 per year over his total school life. In other words, Title I programs cost more and, up to now, have not produced similar results to CPC-DISTAR. Furthermore, a check of the cost of the Francis Parker School and the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, two of the most prestigious schools in the city, indicates their average cost per year for elementary education to be the same (about $1,800 per year) as the CPC's for four years and "mainstreaming" thereafter.

Debra Gordon, principal of the Hansberry and Dickens CPC's,

[6] Stenner explained the reason for this slight loss, which contrasts with the experience of Hughes School, where grade-level scores were steadily maintained: The Hughes students were kept together in CPC's, while students elsewhere were mainstreamed individually.

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pointed out, moreover, that there are three possible savings that are not taken into account in the standard comparisons: 1) DISTAR-trained children rarely, if ever, have to repeat grades; 2) such children rarely require special learning disability classes after being "mainstreamed"; and 3) siblings of DISTAR-trained children benefit greatly, because of the increased awareness of their parents.

DISTAR/CPC-trained black youngsters from the slums can be brought up to grade level and beyond it if as much money is expended on them as in good private schools or under the Title I program. But even more significant, there is no evidence that these same underprivileged children, in private schools or under Title I, will attain results comparable to those achieved with DISTAR and CPC's. Since there seems little likelihood of being able to obtain sufficient funds to adopt CPC's on a wide scale, it is important to recognize that much can be accomplished with smaller expenditures. For example, a three- to four-year program of DISTAR starting in kindergarten may cost only five per cent more for these children, taking into consideration the additional training, supervision, and materials. Still better results can be achieved with paraprofessionals and somewhat smaller classes; and the best results can be obtained by starting the children at age three—which means adding classes, keeping class size down, and obtaining the full involvement of parents and paraprofessionals. But the results of DISTAR seem sufficiently significant so that its use should certainly be extended until something equally effective can be offered.

### Prospects for equal education

What do the results achieved through the use of DISTAR and CPC's mean? First and foremost, they indicate that, apart from any implications for the specific programs, underprivileged black children from slum areas can be taught to read and communicate as well as white children, and can achieve equally high test scores. While this should come as no surprise, there are many for whom it is still a revelation.

Second, the findings indicate that black children can achieve these skills in a segregated school system. The importance of this is obvious, since it suggests that busing for integrated education, which has caused such upheavals in both white and black communities, is not, at least in the earlier grades, a *sine qua non* of educational achievement. However, while busing may not be necessary in the earlier grades, the community must spend considerable addi-

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tional money if black children are to be brought into the mainstream.

This is not a challenge to the *Brown* decision, for, as David Cohen pointed out in his article in the November-December 1974 issue of *Society*, "Brown provided an absolutely necessary step toward equality because it saw desegregation as an obvious way to break down racial ideas and institutional arrangements." Indeed, these findings may assist integration, which is desirable on more than just academic grounds. If the educational level of blacks can be so quickly changed and if the educational achievements of black children can be so vastly improved, then the anticipated problem of lowered academic standards resulting from the admission of blacks into the mainstream may be averted in not too long a time. (The younger children in any case are often excluded from integration programs.) If the DISTAR program were to be extensively utilized and if it were to fulfill its promise, it could make easier the integration of black students into the higher grades.

The statement in the *Brown* decision that "segregation injured the minds and hearts of students and impairs their performance" is not challenged by these findings. While the proliferation of DISTAR's and CPC's might greatly improve educational levels, the basic problems would still be present, and might become more severe if segregation were to continue in its present form. Therefore, it is all-important to break down the institutional and social barriers to integration and provide integrated schooling in the later primary grades. This will certainly be easier to accomplish if the levels of education of black children in the early grades have been raised.

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# The wavering polls

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET

PUBLIC opinion research is in both good shape and bad shape. On the one hand, polling is probably more generally accepted and used now than ever before. Businesses, governments, politicians, and labor all commission surveys before starting a "sales campaign," or in order to evaluate how they are doing with segments of the public. They want a breakdown of the public's values and interests, with respect to what they are selling or doing. The survey has become a major tool of academic research. Government agencies now use samples in lieu of population censuses. The breathlessly awaited unemployment figures are the product of sample surveys.

Yet, on the other hand, there are problems. Pollsters are increasingly concerned about the growing reluctance of the public to be interviewed. The refusal rate has increased. It costs more to find respondents. The same pattern is evident for questionnaire surveys. One leading practitioner, Mervin Field, head of the California Poll, reports that "twenty years ago we could figure on getting 85 per cent with reasonable effort, now we're hard pressed to get 60 per cent." Irving Crespi of the Gallup Poll worries openly that the growth in the refusal rate "threatens the long-term viability of the survey profession." In discussing this phenomenon, some researchers have raised the question whether the increased resistance re-

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flects a growing public hostility to polling, a rising sentiment that it is nobody else's business what one thinks, or a suspicion that government security agencies or sales firms are having their agents pose as interviewers to gain access to homes or to secure confidential information.[1]

Perhaps the increased suspicion and awareness of governmental and business invasions of personal privacy, combined with the use of the interviewer role as a means of gaining access by salesmen, is responsible—in the context of an increasingly suspicious world—for the growing refusal rate. (This reminds me of one definition of the difference between the paranoid and a normal person. The paranoid is a person who lacks the normal person's ability to repress awareness of the hostile behavior of those around him. Perhaps we are all becoming more aware.)

But if the public as potential interviewee is less willing to cooperate, the public as consumer of opinion research is eager to use it. Various elites want very much to know how the people "out there" are reacting. The growing numbers of the college-educated among the population also want to know. And as elites become more concerned with opinion findings, opinion researchers increase their influence. This is not the old issue of the "bandwagon effect" on the electorate, an effect which really never has been demonstrated. But where opinion results clearly do matter is in affecting the behavior of decision-makers who change their policies or their strategies because of survey findings.

We can see this today in the current Presidential campaign. The published polls have almost made a front-runner out of the most eager non-candidate in history, Hubert Humphrey. Associates of the announced Democratic candidates complain bitterly over the fact that Gallup and Harris run Presidential trial heats which include Kennedy and Humphrey on the list of possible candidates. They say that this is unfair, that the pollsters should take these men at their word, and that they should limit the choices to those

[1] The increased concern about privacy has led some to question whether a polling organization can in fact guarantee anonymity. Some time ago, Vern Countryman, of the Harvard Law School, publicly urged students not to complete questionnaires sent by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, on the grounds that any information they supplied concerning their political views or affiliations or their use of marijuana or other illicit drugs might end up in the hands of police agencies. I challenged Countryman's assumptions, asserting that this had never happened and that pollsters—like physicians, lawyers, or newspapermen—would refuse to divulge sources; but he contended there was nothing in the law to protect their right to do so, and that he so advised everyone who was asked for an interview or to fill out a questionnaire.

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who have declared for the race. In effect, they are arguing that Gallup and Harris have created a situation which bypasses the normal primary system, that the polls may determine who the Democratic nominee will be, and that if published polls were not available, the situation would be different.

The new conservative strategy, advanced in recent books by William Rusher and Kevin Philips, urging the creation of a Conservative Party to replace the Republicans, and underlying some of the enthusiasm for Ronald Reagan, is in large part a reaction to surveys which show that there are many more self-identified "conservatives" than "liberals" at the same time that self-proclaimed Democrats considerably outnumber Republicans.[2]

Poll results in pre-primary situations—which are inherently much less reliable than in general elections, because of less knowledge about, and less structure of, the choices, and because of the small proportion of the electorate who vote in primaries—have helped to determine the results of primaries by undercutting funds and enthusiasm for candidates who appear as also-rans. Hubert Humphrey was greatly disadvantaged in the decisive California primary in 1972 by published surveys which showed him farther behind McGovern than the actual results suggested he had been. The highly reputable California Poll reported four days before the June primary that McGovern was ahead of Humphrey by 20 per cent (46 per cent to 25 per cent), but just a few days later McGovern won by only five per cent. At the time, Humphrey's California campaign manager credited this poll with determining the outcome of the 1972 election, by cutting off campaign contributions: "It was just like turning off the water tap with one flick of the wrist. If it had been more accurate, we would have raised more money, spent more money, and we would have won. If we had won California, there are a lot of people who say we would have won the nomination and won the election."

The events in California in 1972 were not unusual. In general, discrepancies between primary election returns and poll estimates

[2] This seeming contradiction is in fact easy to explain. The term "conservative" has come to mean, for many people, what has been referred to as "social conservatism," rather than "economic conservatism." When people say they are "conservative," what many mean is that they are for tougher laws and policies concerning the treatment of criminals, the outlawing of pornography, an end to permissiveness in matters related to sex, and opposition to forced busing of school children. When many of the same people say they favor the Democrats rather than Republicans, they indicate that they are "economic liberals"—that they favor New Deal-like policies in areas such as health care, planning to prevent unemployment, etc.

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are greater than between general election returns and poll estimates—a fact rarely, if ever, mentioned in newspaper columns presenting pre-primary public preferences. Discrepancies between pre-election surveys and election returns are lowest in Presidential contests where the pollsters report on the opinions of voters at the end of a highly publicized, well-structured, partisan contest which has lasted for months, and in which turnout is higher than in other situations. Efforts to "predict" the results of primary contests or of nonpartisan mayoralty races have produced gaps of from 10 to 20 per cent. In Minneapolis, for example, the Metro Poll published by the *Star* reported mayoralty candidate Charles Stenvig running third in the elimination primary in 1969. Stenvig actually placed first by a wide margin. In 1973, the *Star* poll considerably overestimated Stenvig's support, casting him in the lead before the election by 10 per cent—and he eventually lost the race. In Boston in 1975, the *Globe* mayoralty poll for the September primary, published two days before the election, reported incumbent Kevin White ahead by two-to-one, with a lead of over 20 per cent. White's eventual plurality was less than half of this. The *Globe* decided not to run a poll for the final election. In the November 1975 elimination primary for mayor of San Francisco, candidate Dianne Feinstein's strategy "to conduct the high tone campaign aimed at issues, not personalities" was, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "based on polls which showed Mrs. Feinstein comfortably assured of a spot in the runoff." In the election she finished in third place, out of the running for the final contest.

## Who's ahead for President?

Opinion polls have power to affect what happens, not so much by affecting what people do, but by affecting what leaders do. This should make us especially concerned about issues of validity and reliability. But at least equally important is the way results are presented and interpreted. There is, of course, no way of controlling how those who read the results of a survey interpret them, but opinion researchers do have an obligation to point out how different factors may affect the reliability of their findings, e.g., the type of sampling, the number of non-respondents, the wording of questions, the choices given to respondents, the place a question is located, the saliency of issues, the lack of stability of various opinions, etc.

These issues occasioned considerable public comment when the

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Gallup and Harris polls disagreed in December 1975 about the strength of Hubert Humphrey in trial heats against Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. On December 15, Harris reported that Humphrey led Ford 52 per cent to 41 per cent, and Reagan by 50 per cent to 43 per cent. Three days later, Gallup announced that Ford was trouncing Humphrey by 51 per cent to 39 per cent, and that Reagan led him by 50 per cent to 42 per cent. A Gallup executive, James Shriver, told a *Washington Post* reporter that "we cannot account for the difference between the two polls—there is no way that it can be accounted for." On second thought, representatives of both organizations suggested that the discrepancy might reflect a genuine rapid shift in opinion, since the Gallup survey was conducted after the President's trip to China, while the Harris poll preceded it. Louis Harris explained: "We caught Ford without the 'halo effect' of China; Gallup caught him with the 'halo effect' of China." This interpretation is somewhat dubious, particularly since it has no bearing on the difference in the results of a Humphrey-Reagan race. In January 1976, the range of variation among four major surveys in their estimates of a Ford-Humphrey contest was 10 per cent—a fact seriously ignored by the press, which had played up the December discrepancies. Thus, Harris indicated that Humphrey had a four-per-cent lead, 49 to 45; Gallup found a dead heat, 47 each; and the Yankelovich and NBC surveys each reported Ford ahead by six points, 46 to 40 and 48 to 42, respectively.

Such differences in reports by the widely reported polls are, however, not new—although they rarely attract so much attention. The Gallup and Harris polls have differed consistently in their estimate of the public's view of President Ford. In a survey released for publication in early December 1974, Gallup reported that in answer to the question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ford is handling his job as President?" 42 per cent approved, 41 per cent disapproved, and 17 per cent had no opinion. Harris' December results for the question, "How do you rate the job President Ford is doing as President—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?" found 46 per cent giving "positive" replies, 52 per cent "negative," and only two per cent "not sure." Two months earlier, Gallup indicated that the country approved of Ford by 55 per cent to 28 per cent, while Harris said that it disapproved by 49 per cent to 45 per cent. The differences between the two surveys in the percentage of respondents with no opinion on such questions are consistently large: Gallup, from 15 per cent to more than 20 per cent; Harris, generally well under 10 per cent.

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Variations such as these occur in estimates of the popularity of Congress, too. In March 1975, Gallup reported 32 per cent approved and 50 per cent disapproved of "the way Congress is handling its job." Harris said that 26 per cent had a positive view of "the job Congress has been doing so far this year," while 67 per cent had a negative view. Negative views outnumbered positive ones in Gallup's data by 18 per cent, while Harris' data showed a difference of 41 per cent.

## Divergence on issues

It is not just when the polls disagree over their popularity that political figures may be confused and led into actions they might otherwise not undertake. Politicians may be equally confused when the polls disagree over issues—a circumstance just as frequent. In a national survey at the beginning of November 1975, the *New York Times* found that the public favored federal funds to help New York City in its financial crisis by 55 to 33 per cent. Three weeks earlier, before President Ford's speech opposing such a policy, Gallup had reported opposition to such aid, by 49 to 42 per cent. The variation over a three-week period between a seven-per-cent plurality disapproving and a 22-per-cent plurality approving was in response to identically worded questions: "Do you think the federal government should or should not provide funds to help New York City get out of its financial difficulties?" The two surveys, however, employed different interviewing techniques: Gallup's results were obtained from face-to-face interviews, while the *Times* queried its respondents by telephone.

It is easier to understand differences on specific issues when a question is worded somewhat differently. In January 1975, Gallup asked respondents to choose between "two plans to reduce consumption of gasoline." Plan A involved rationing—"Each driver would be able to buy up to 10 gallons per week, with the price remaining at the amount he or she presently pays"; Plan B contained a price increase—"Each driver would be able to buy as much gas as desired, but the price would be increased by about 10 cents per gallon above what he or she presently pays." Harris, at about the same time, asked: "In order to conserve oil, if you had to choose, would you have mandatory gasoline rationing, on an odd-even basis with no increase in the price of gasoline, or no rationing, but an 11-cent-a-gallon rise in the price of gasoline and fuel oil as a result of the tariff on imported oil from abroad?"

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Both reported their results by contrasting rationing with a price increase or oil imports tax. Gallup found 37 per cent for rationing and 48 per cent for a 10-cent-per-gallon price increase, while Harris reported 60 per cent for rationing and only 25 per cent for an 11-cent-per-gallon increase in the tax. Much of the difference, of course, was probably the result of the variation in question wording: One defined rationing as limiting purchases to 10 gallons a week, while the other did not mention any limit. But the reports as published in the press presented the results in terms of rationing versus a price increase; and in these terms, they reported sharply contradictory results.

The results of the ideological self-identification question also came out differently in different surveys. Between November 1974 and March 1975, four polling agencies asked national samples to locate themselves as conservatives or liberals, asking differently worded questions. Harris and Gallup found many more self-identified conservatives than liberals, while the two university polling centers, the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the University of Michigan and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) of the University of Chicago, reported little or no differences in the proportions of liberals and conservatives. In November Gallup asked: "If an arrangement of this kind, that is two new political parties, were carried out, and you had to make a choice, which party would you personally prefer—the conservative party or the liberal party?" The results were 40 per cent conservative, 30 per cent liberal, and 30 per cent undecided. In December, Harris inquired: "How would you describe your own political philosophy, as conservative, middle-of-the-road, liberal, or radical?" His findings were 30 per cent conservative, 15 per cent liberal, three per cent radical, 43 per cent middle-of-the-road and nine per cent undecided. Also in November, SRC interviewers asked: "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about it?" Conservatives led liberals slightly, by 25 per cent to 21 per cent, with 26 per cent choosing the mid-point position, 21 per cent saying they hadn't thought much about it, and seven per cent responding that they didn't know. The question asked in March 1975 by NORC was almost identical to that asked by SRC, except that it did not include the option, "or haven't you thought much about it." The NORC study produced a tie be-

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tween the liberal and conservative alternatives. Both received 28 per cent, with 37 per cent placing themselves in the middle and six per cent responding that they didn't know.

SRC has furnished an interesting set of sharply divergent results in two of their own studies (taken, it should be noted, two months apart, with the 1968 Presidential election intervening). In the pre-election survey, the Michigan interviewers asked a national sample: "Would you say that people like you have quite a lot of say about what the government does, or that you don't have much say at all?" Three quarters chose the option, "don't have much say at all." Two months later, the same issue was presented as an agree/disagree item in the following terms: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." This time only 41 per cent agreed—34 per cent less than the number who had seemingly voiced a comparable opinion earlier. A difference of the same magnitude was reported in answer to other highly similar questions in the two SRC polls: pre-election—"Would you say that politics and government are so complicated that people like you can't really understand what's going on, or that you can understand what's going on pretty well"; and post-election—"Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on." Less than half the respondents (44.5 per cent) chose "can't really understand" in the first survey, while 71 per cent agreed with this view two months later. Some might suggest that the change in views resulted from changing the quotation from an either/or form to agree/disagree. This may be so, but the same surveys also included two other closely related questions which shifted format but *not* response distribution. The SRC pre-election study asked: "Would you say that most public officials care quite a lot about what people like you think, or that they don't care much at all?" Following the election SRC included the item: "I don't think public officials care much what people like and think." The two formulations produced highly comparable answer patterns. And, similarly, questions about the efficacy of voting in the two studies produced almost identical response patterns. Why two questions showed such changes while two others did not is puzzling, to say the least. I have no plausible explanation.

## Divergence on foreign policy

Nor is it easier to discover what the American public "really thinks" on foreign policy. In April 1973, Harris found 49 per cent

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opposed the "bombing by United States planes in Cambodia." During the same month Gallup's results showed that 57 per cent disapproved of "bombing Communist positions in Cambodia and Laos." In January, Gallup reported that 42 per cent agreed when asked: "If a peace agreement is reached should we help rebuild North Vietnamese cities?" In February, Harris asked whether respondents "favor aid to North Vietnam to rebuild war-time damage" and only 21 per cent favored aid. There was a similar lack of consensus in estimating the public's attitude toward reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba at the end of 1974. Gallup reported 63 per cent in favor, while Harris indicated only 50 per cent.

One of the sharpest changes in sentiments on an important policy issue was reported over a five-month period by the Harris organization. In December 1974, Harris interviewers asked: "There has been a lot of discussion about what circumstances might justify United States military involvement, including the use of United States troops. Do you feel if [12 different circumstances for various countries] you would favor or oppose U.S. military involvement?" Only 14 per cent favored such involvement "if North Korea attacked South Korea," while 65 per cent were opposed. In May 1975, Harris asked a specific question about Korea in the following terms: "The United States has 36,000 troops and airmen in South Korea. If North Korea invaded South Korea, we have a firm commitment to defend South Korea with our own military forces. If South Korea were invaded by North Korea, would you favor or oppose the United States using troops, air power, and naval power to defend South Korea?" Not surprisingly, this wording elicited a much higher positive response for American military participation than the earlier question, but still the variation was large: The use of United States troops was favored by 43 per cent to 37 per cent in the second study, as compared to the earlier unfavorable majority of 65 per cent to 14 per cent.

Reports on public opinion toward United States involvement in Korea were equally disparate 25 years ago during the Korean war. In December 1950, the Gallup Poll asked: "Do you think the United States made a mistake in going into the war in Korea or not?"; and only 30 per cent approved of the war. But a NORC survey taken in the same month reported 55 per cent in favor, in response to the query: "Do you think the United States was right or wrong in sending American troops to stop the Communist invasion of South Korea?" In April 1951, a repeat by Gallup of his earlier question produced a 43 per cent vote in favor, while NORC

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found 63 per cent in favor of intervention, in reply to the more emotionally worded question. These differences in the response patterns reported by the two organizations occurred consistently all through the Korean war.

Two surveys conducted one month apart by NORC in 1953 produced a 37 per cent variation in the proportion supporting the war—seemingly as a result of varying the question. In August, NORC asked: "As things stand now, do you feel the war in Korea has been worth fighting, or not?" Only 27 per cent responded positively. But one month later, when NORC used the formulation which asked whether "the United States was right or wrong" to have sent troops, 64 per cent said that the policy was right. The Gallup Poll also produced an equally large difference to two differently worded questions about the Korean war. Can one speak of the true or real feelings of the American public regarding Korean policy in the 1950's or now when the same polling organizations, presumably using the same sampling frames, interviewers, etc., can elicit such disparate results by varying the wording of the question?

## The polls and the Middle East

We find the same problem concerning American policies in the Middle East conflict. In presenting the results of a survey taken in December 1974, Harris wrote in a *New York Times Magazine* article: "Another lopsided 66 to 24 majority favors sending Israel what it needs in the way of military hardware." One month earlier, a Yankelovich poll found only 31 per cent in favor of the United States sending arms to Israel, while 57 per cent were against. In January 1975, Yankelovich found 45 per cent in favor of military aid to Israel in response to one question, a figure which declined to 28 per cent when the question was formulated differently in the same survey. And a Gallup survey also taken in January found that only 16 per cent supported military aid of various types for the Jewish state, with another seven per cent urging general support. Over half the respondents, 55 per cent, gave Gallup interviewers responses which were coded under the heading, "stay out of the conflict." A couple of months later, however, Gallup reported that 54 per cent favored sending either military supplies (42 per cent) or American troops (12 per cent), while only 37 per cent opposed American aid to Israel in a renewed Middle East conflagration.

Presumably, these drastic variations resulted from the very dif-

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ferent way the questions were formulated in the five studies. In December, Harris interviewers got a 66 per cent positive response for military aid to Israel when they asked: "As you know, the United States has sent planes, tanks, artillery, and other weapons to arm Israel. The Russians have sent similar military supplies for Egypt and Syria. In general, with the Russians arming Egypt and Syria, do you think the United States is right or wrong to send Israel the military supplies it needs?" Yankelovich found a 31 per cent figure in November in reply to a question about military aid to Israel in the context of queries about a number of countries: "The United States sends arms and military equipment to a number of foreign countries. Do you personally feel that the United States should or should not send arms to [country A, B, C, Israel]." The 45 per cent favorable response to military aid in January was in reply to the question: "In view of the situation in the Middle East, do you feel that United States should increase its present aid to Israel, continue it at the same level as now, or cut it back." The much lower 28 per cent figure in the same survey was in response to this question: "Do you favor selling arms and military equipment to both Israel and the Arabs, just Israel, just Arabs, or neither." Fourteen per cent said, "Both"; another 14 per cent, "Just Israel"; and almost two thirds (63 per cent) opposed selling arms to either.

Gallup's low report of 16 per cent was obtained in January in reply to an open-ended question: "What should the United States do if a full-scale war breaks out in the Middle East?" His high estimate of 54 per cent occurred in April in answer to the query: "In the event a nation is attacked by Communist-backed forces, there are several things the United States can do about it. What action would you want us to take if Israel is attacked—send American troops, or send military supplies but not send American troops, or refuse to get involved?" These six questions produced responses of 66 per cent, 45 per cent, 31 per cent, 28 per cent, 16 per cent, and 54 per cent in favor of sending or selling arms and/or troops to aid Israel.

And, as a final note on this issue, it must be reported that a Harris survey of February 1975 found the public opposed to "selling military equipment to [all] nations" by 53 per cent to 35 per cent.

The problem basically is that public attitudes toward a given issue are usually too complex to be summed up by the responses to one or two questions. People can and do hold what appear to

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be contradictory opinions on the same subject. This point may be illustrated by reference to the responses given by a national sample of American professors to a number of questions on the Middle East situation in a survey conducted in the spring of 1975 by Everett Ladd and myself. Almost three quarters (74 per cent) agreed with the statement, "The United States should pursue a more neutral and evenhanded policy in the Middle East"—and 31 per cent strongly agreed. Slightly more than half agreed that "The United States should apply pressure on Israel to give in more to Arab demands." Two thirds disagreed with the proposal that "If the United Nations were to vote to expel Israel, the United States should withdraw from the United Nations in protest."

Yet over two thirds of the *same* national sample of college faculty approved the statement: "The United States should continue to supply Israel with weapons and military equipment." When asked "If Israel were attacked by Arab countries and threatened with defeat," and offered four courses of United States action, less than a quarter (24 per cent) recommended that the United States "take no military action." A larger group (30 per cent) endorsed sending either "air support" (13 per cent) or "United States troops if necessary" (17 per cent). The remaining 45 per cent favored sending "military aid but not United States personnel." Over three quarters of the faculty respondents agreed that "Israel has a right to keep the city of Jerusalem as its capital, so long as the Israelis respect the religious rights of Christians and Moslems."

Close to two thirds (64 per cent), however, thought that "The Arabs should be allowed to set up a separate nation of Palestine on the West Bank of the Jordan." But only 13 per cent agreed that "Guerilla activities on the part of the Palestinian Arabs are justified because there is no other way for them to bring their grievances to the attention of the world." This reply, however, did not reflect the large majority's disapproval of violent means, for almost two thirds (65 per cent) disagreed with the statement, "It is wrong for Israel to retaliate against the Arabs whenever Arab guerillas commit an act of terrorism."

Looking at this diverse set of responses, it is apparent that it would have been impossible to sum up the views of this group by a few simple questions designed to locate their general sympathies in the Middle East conflict. Like most Americans, faculty sympathies lie more with Israel (57 per cent) than with the Arabs (eight per cent), and such sympathies are reflected in support for armed aid for Israel, for its claims on Jerusalem, for its right to

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retaliate. But by a large majority the faculty also do not want to see the United States involved in a Middle East war, and would like to see the tensions reduced. These sentiments give rise to approval of proposals that the United States pursue a more "even-handed" policy, that it press Israel to "give in more to Arab demands," that the Arabs be allowed a Palestinian state.

### Presenting the polls

The problem is not that research designs are unsophisticated but that the published reports, or even private ones for clients, often simplify the issues, on the assumption that the reader will not understand or care to know about complexities, or that he wants relatively straightforward and simple answers with respect to attitudes toward federal help for New York, aid to Israel, buying a new car next year, etc.

There are, of course, many other issues involved in interpreting opinion from surveys. The picture presented can appear very different, depending on how the answers to the same questions are presented. Thus, a number of polling organizations have inquired as to the confidence the public has in the people in charge of various institutions—medicine, Congress, major companies, the Supreme Court, etc. All the surveys agree that confidence, as expressed in responses to these questions, has been eroding since the mid-1960's, although it must be mentioned again that the percentages reported giving the same response to the same question for the same institution at about the same time have varied considerably.

One polling organization, the market research division of Procter and Gamble Company, noting the variation in responses to such questions, recently undertook an experiment to see how much expression of confidence in different institutions may be varied by using different terms to describe them. They divided their sample into three groups and asked them whether they "have a great deal of confidence, a moderate amount of confidence, or no confidence" in a number of institutions, giving each third a different term for the same institution. Some of the results are presented in the table on the next page.

It is clear from looking at these results that a sharply different picture of the level of confidence in different institutions emerges when different words are used to depict them. Fifty per cent have a great deal of confidence in "established religion," but only 35 per cent feel the same way about "organized religion." Almost two

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*Level of Confidence in Different American Institutions, Using Different Terms*[1]

| Institution | Great Deal of Confidence | Moderate Confidence | No Confidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Army, Navy, and Air Force | 63% | 31% | 6% |
| The Military | 48 | 45 | 7 |
| Military Leaders | 21 | 59 | 20 |
| Established Religion | 50 | 41 | 9 |
| Ministers and other Religious Leaders | 35 | 56 | 9 |
| Organized Religion | 35 | 49 | 16 |
| Television News | 31 | 58 | 11 |
| Network Television News | 25 | 69 | 6 |
| Television News Commentators | 23 | 66 | 11 |
| Colleges | 2 | 52 | 46 |
| Professors | 9 | 62 | 29 |
| Business | 20 | 73 | 7 |
| Business Leaders | 18 | 68 | 14 |
| Big Business | 12 | 62 | 26 |
| Organized Labor | 21 | 53 | 26 |
| Union Leaders | 12 | 63 | 25 |
| Big Labor | 7 | 66 | 27 |
| Public Opinion Pollsters | 14 | 68 | 18 |
| Public Opinion Polls | 16 | 55 | 29 |
| Election Polls | 20 | 45 | 35 |
| United States Presidency | 30 | 53 | 17 |
| Executive Branch of Federal Government | 18 | 62 | 20 |
| Federal Government | 16 | 69 | 15 |
| Government | 20 | 64 | 16 |
| Elected Government Officials | 5 | 65 | 20 |
| Congress | 7 | 74 | 19 |
| Politicians | 2 | 53 | 45 |
| Politics | 4 | 65 | 31 |

[1] Source: Market Research Division of Procter and Gamble Company.

thirds (63 per cent) are very positive about the "Army, Navy, and Air Force," but the high level of confidence declines to 48 per cent for the "Military," and drops way down to 21 per cent for "Military Leaders." More than a third (35 per cent) express no confidence in "election polls," but only 18 per cent have the same negative view of "Public Opinion Pollsters." Twenty-one per cent have a great deal of confidence in "Organized Labor," but only seven per cent have the same view of "Big Labor." The responses reported in this table tell us a great deal about the public's sentiments, but just as important, they illustrate in detail the instability of such replies—the extent to which it is possible to vary the public's view by changing the way in which institutions are labeled.

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It is also important to recognize that one gets a very different image of the confidence level of the country depending on whether a survey organization reports and discusses the proportion of respondents voicing "great confidence" while lumping together those indicating "some confidence" with "hardly any confidence at all," or makes the break between any confidence and none at all. The most widely circulated poll reports published in the press, those conducted by the Harris organization, usually give only the "great deal of confidence" figure—which in recent years has been under 50 per cent, often well under that figure, for the leaders of most institutions.

But if we look at the per cent of those who say they have "hardly any confidence," a quite different picture emerges. According to a 1975 NORC survey, for all except the leaders in the political realm (the executive) and organized labor, the proportion indicating a lack of confidence runs only from a tenth to a fifth, while even for politics and labor the proportions are all under 30 per cent. Or to put the matter another way, from 71 per cent to 92 per cent of respondents indicate "some" or "a great deal of confidence" in various key institutions. Is the confidence glass more full or more empty? The implications of the results are debatable, but Harris, in reporting the low proportions voicing "a great deal of confidence," concluded in October 1975: "In short, there is a leadership vacuum in this country across the board."

## Recognizing the limitations

Given the increased influence survey analysts have in affecting the policies of businesses, other institutions, journalists, politicians, and the mood of the general public, it is important that the limitations of the polling instrument be recognized more widely than they are. Much of this is obvious to those who work professionally with survey data. But like most businessmen, they do not stress the deficiencies of their product to clients. They do not emphasize the complexities involved in analyzing data, or the frequent need for more expensive research or more detailed and complicated write-ups required for the client to understand the state of opinion.

Thus it is obvious—and George Gallup made the point over three decades ago—that it is easy to change responses by presenting a given view in association with positively or negatively valued symbols, goals, or persons. By associating a given choice of action with resistance to Communist attack or with the possibility of

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sending United States troops into action, the percentage favorable may be varied by as much as 20 per cent to 30 per cent. Response distribution is affected greatly by where a question is located in a schedule. After reporting large-scale variations in different polls seeking to measure support or opposition to the war or to specific Vietnam policies, three academic authorities on survey research, Milton Rosenberg, Sidney Verba, and Philip Converse, concluded in their book, *Vietnam and the Silent Majority*:

> One of the reasons why subtle changes in the wording of a question produce different responses is that many of the people whom the pollster questions do not have very well-formed and deeply held opinions on the matters about which a pollster is asking. They are likely to be responding to a question to which they have not given much or any previous thought. What this means is that the wording of the question makes a big difference in how they reply. It also means that the answers that any individual gives can possibly change from day to day. If an individual has not given serious thought to a question, his answer is likely to be offhand. If the pollster were to come back the next day, a somewhat different answer would be obtained. . . . If a question is asked in which negative symbols are associated with withdrawal from the war, people sound quite "hawkish" in their responses. Thus, people reject "defeat," "Communist take-overs," and "the loss of American credibility." On the other hand, if negative symbols are associated with a pro-war position, the American public will sound "dovish." They reject "killings," "continuing the war," and "domestic costs." Turning the matter upside down, we see the same thing. If positive symbols are associated with the war, the American public sounds "hawkish." They support "American prestige," "defense of democracy," and "support for our soldiers in Vietnam." On the other hand, if positive symbols are associated with "dovish" positions, the people sound "dovish." They come out in support of "peace," "worrying about our own problems before we worry about the problems of other people," and "saving American lives."
>
> Thus it is possible, even in the same poll, to have the American public sounding like hawks and doves at the same time. At times, these seeming inconsistencies are due to the fact that the positions are not that inconsistent, but at times they are due simply to the alternative question wordings. Lastly, we should point out that many Americans do, in fact, hold inconsistent views on the war. They favor sets of policies that are not compatible one with another. . . .

In seeking to understand the considerable variations between the *New York Times* and the Gallup poll regarding federal aid to New York City, Robert Reinhold, a *New York Times* reporter, noted that Gallup and the *Times* used different interviewing methods (face-to-face versus telephone interviews), that "the questions

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were asked in different contexts," that there was " 'measurement error'—imperfections in the questionnaire or slight differences in the way questions are asked and perceived," that there was a significant number of refusals—30 per cent of those called by the *Times* "declined to be interviewed," and that there was "wide public confusion over the complex issue." Such methodological problems, however, are rarely presented in articles reporting on survey findings. Clearly, what occasioned their mention was the enormous difference between Gallup's results, reported on the front page of the *Times* on November 2, 1975, and the *Times*' own study, published only three days later. Since the *Times* could hardly have presented such a discrepancy without offering some comment, it followed the unusual procedure of devoting considerable space to explaining the possible sources "for an unusually high margin of error" in all opinion surveys.

As a final point, it is also important to note that the opinions of the public, even those expressed a few days before an event takes place, may be sharply different from their reaction to the accomplished fact, particularly if it is one initiated by an important leader figure such as the President. George Gallup pointed this out at the end of the 1930's regarding foreign and military policies, conscription, etc., before and after President Roosevelt gave his views on the subject. Similarly, a more recent development has been discussed by Rosenberg and his colleagues:

> The role of Presidential prestige and the willingness of the American public to go along with Presidential activities once he has acted can be seen rather clearly in the reaction to President Nixon's decision to send troops into Cambodia at the end of April, 1970. As Presidential actions go, this was perhaps one of the least popular actions of the Indo-China war. Yet the data are most striking.
>
> On the eve of the Cambodian invasion, the Harris Poll asked a sample of the American population how they would feel about the commitment of American troops to Cambodia. Only seven per cent favored sending troops while 59 per cent rejected such a commitment. (Twenty-three per cent approved the sending of advisers and the rest were undecided.)
>
> What happened a few days later when the President did commit troops? . . . Despite the very small number who favored sending American troops to Cambodia before the President did just that and despite the skepticism and apprehension of a very large majority after they were sent, when the Harris Poll asked whether Nixon was right in sending troops, more said "yes" than "no." Fifty per cent agreed with Nixon's decision while 43 per cent had doubts.
>
> These data vividly illustrate the prestige of the President when he

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> acts and the malleability of American opinion. The wide gap between the seven per cent who favored sending troops before they were sent and the 50 per cent who approved the President's decision after he had decided to send the troops is a measure of the support he can arouse. . . .

This discussion is not intended to undermine opinion research, but rather to emphasize the need for greater care. Most issues are quite complicated and require a number of questions to explore the nature of the views held. Many questions asked of people deal with matters of little concern to them; they often know little and care less, yet they answer the questions. A study of attitudes toward the John Birch Society in the 1960's found that when those with opinions about the organization were also asked whether they though it was a leftist or rightist group, one third of them described the Birch society as leftist! But most polls did not try to discover what image, if any, respondents had of the Birch Society. What is one to make of the fact that, in a 1974 survey, over a third of those who said they preferred George Wallace to Richard Nixon or George McGovern agreed with the item, "I would not vote for a right-winger"? Or how is one to interpret the finding drawn in a November 1952 survey that 38 per cent of those who said that the war in Korea was not worth fighting also endorsed the policy option, "Go ahead and attack the Chinese Communists"?

Public confidence in the polls rests largely on the fact that preelection surveys have a good track record for their particularly elaborate efforts to anticipate the reactions of the electorate presented with a choice between two men, or occasionally three, in a Presidential contest. Fortunately for the image of election polls, no one has bothered to check up on their record in forecasting results in primaries, referenda, or mayoralty or statewide contests.

## The need for humility

Recognizing problems such as these, some academics suggest that their concern is not to report that a given percentage of the population are isolationists, liberals, or racists, but rather to understand the factors associated with different views or behaviors. For, as against absolute magnitudes, relationships are generally consistent and reliable: Scales of opinion preferences, buying behavior, or media habits can be related to demographic and attitudinal variables, so we can know what *kinds* of people are social conservatives, or own Volvos. It is possible to analyze what kinds of

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people will vote for a particular candidate, or what his image is, or what the image of a product is, among different groups in the population; and pollsters can specify how hard or soft commitments to different views are.

Yet, even the way that different sub-groups are associated with a pattern of response may be affected by the wording of questions. Thus, in *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion,* the most comprehensive analysis of public opinion towards the Korean and Vietnam wars, John Mueller questions the conclusions of academic "studies which have argued that the well-educated and the better-off are inclined to be hawks." Mueller notes that this conclusion, based on questions which presented limited policy alternatives, was thrown into doubt by the response pattern to "survey questions that cover the *entire* range of alternatives in the hawk/dove continuum from extreme escalation to extreme deescalation. The problem in many studies has been that the hawk end of the scale has been truncated, with extreme escalation not included." Examining surveys which presented a more comprehensive range, Mueller found that "higher-status groups tend to reject *both* plans for withdrawal *and* plans for extreme escalation. . . . Lower status people, from this evidence, seem to adopt a sort of all-or-nothing preference rather than a consistent dove or hawk pose. In part, this point of view may reflect some of the aspects of the 'working-class authoritarian' personality . . . the desire for 'immediate gratification' in life and for 'immediate action' in politics."

For the most part it would seem that the variation in response reported by different surveys may be explained by variations in the wording of questions, the sample design, and the research procedures followed by different organizations, each of which is conscientiously seeking to report the state of opinion. Do the biases of the polling organizations themselves occasionally influence the way they word their questions? In commenting on Gallup's formulation of questions during the Korean war, when respondents were asked to state whether we should stay or get out after first being informed that Communist China had "forces far outnumbering" ours, John Mueller notes that "the questions are framed in such a remarkably *tendentious* manner that the only safe inference is that the Gallup organization, itself, favored United States withdrawal from Korea at the end of 1950." A similar inference may be made from the formulation of the Harris organization when it asked in 1974, "In general, with the Russians arming Syria and Egypt, do you think the United States is right or wrong to send Israel the military

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supplies it needs?" Not surprisingly, both queries elicited two thirds in support of the policy alternative which seems favored by the wording of the question. The difference in findings between the Harris and Gallup organizations with respect to approval or disapproval of Gerald Ford's record as President, or his and Ronald Reagan's support running against Hubert Humphrey, correspond to the relations of the heads of these organizations to the Democratic Party. It is generally recognized that Harris is much more overtly sympathetic to liberal and Democratic political causes than is Gallup.

I do not believe that the polling organizations are consciously dishonest or partisan. In addition to their concern for professional integrity, they have too much at stake to deliberately attempt to influence their results. Yet being only human, it is also hard to believe that desired outcomes do not occasionally unwittingly affect the way they design and interpret their results. The strictures which Max Weber directed against those academics who purport to follow what he described as a "spurious 'ethically neutral' " approach apply to commercial or political pollsters at least as much as to scholars. Weber warned researchers to be suspicious of findings which agreed with their "line," a caution which all those who claim to advance politically relevant knowledge through objectively quantifiable methods should take to heart. It must be reiterated that it is not really possible to know the opinion of the public on most issues, since there is no such opinion. There is, at best, usually a set of predispositions, but locating these does not enable us to predict behavior or subsequent poll results with any precision.

Given all this, my counsel to all involved in survey research is humility, caution, and a recognition of complexity. Pollsters may reject making the client aware of the limits of survey findings as ruinous to business, but I do not think that would cause a loss of business. For people—whether businessmen, politicians, editors, or the more politicized segment of the public—have an insatiable and uncontrollable need to know something, anything, about public reactions. They will pay for research, for reports, for articles, even if they are reminded of the weak reeds on which the conclusions rest. And by reemphasizing the instability of many attitudes and preferences of the public, we may help restore the role of judgment, of active leadership in policy and in decision-making, rather than the pattern of leaders following followers, which is currently so prevalent.

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# How much more equality can we afford?

EDGAR K. BROWNING

It is probably true, as *Business Week* recently reported, that "the greatest single force changing and expanding the role of the federal government in the United States today is the push for equality." Although some government statistics misleadingly indicate otherwise, it is clear that the distribution of income has become dramatically more equal in recent years as a result of egalitarian policies. Moreover, the massive redistribution currently taking place each year makes it very costly to attempt to move still further toward equality. I will show why by examining the economic and ethical implications of additional redistribution.

## How unequal are incomes?

One popular index of inequality is the number of Americans officially classified as poor. In 1973, there were 23 million people classified as poor, only one third less than the 33 million in 1965. Yet there has been a tremendous expansion in government programs designed to aid the poor during this period: Social welfare expenditures by all levels of government rose from $77 billion in 1965 to $215 billion in 1973. Many people have been troubled

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over how such a massive commitment of resoures could produce such a small reduction in the number of poor Americans.

The major reason for the apparent persistence of poverty in the face of such expenditures lies in the definition of poverty itself. A family is officially poor when its *money* income falls below a certain level—$4250 annually for a family of four in 1973, for example. Thus, because government programs dispensing benefits in the form of specific goods and services ("in-kind" transfers) do not and cannot raise *money* incomes, they are unable to move families out of poverty, so defined. Interestingly, government in-kind transfers have expanded at a much more rapid rate in recent years than have cash transfers, following the growth of medicare, medicaid, food stamps, housing assistance, and job training programs. Table I shows this clearly in the breakdown of federal transfers to the poor for several recent years. (These tabulations give *only* those federal transfers that actually reach the poor, and not total spending on the various programs.) To see clearly why the number of poor Americans has not declined more rapidly, note that in-kind transfers per poor person rose from $42 to $657 between 1964 and 1973—or by 1464 per cent! These resources are not counted as income in the official definitions of poverty. In contrast, cash transfers, which are counted as income, rose by only 172 per cent.

Clearly in-kind transfers should be counted as income in de-

TABLE I. *Federal Outlays Benefiting the Poor, Selected Fiscal Years*[1]

| | 1964 | 1966 | 1969 | 1973 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federal outlays (in billions) | | | | |
| Cash payments | $6.4 | $7.1 | $8.2 | $11.1 |
| Food and housing transfers | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 3.5 |
| Education | 0.1 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 1.9 |
| Health | 0.7 | 0.8 | 3.5 | 5.4 |
| Manpower | 0.2 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 2.5 |
| Other | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 1.9 |
| Total | $7.9 | $10.3 | $15.9 | $26.2 |
| Total federal cash transfers (in billions) | $6.4 | $7.1 | $8.2 | $11.1 |
| Total federal in-kind transfers (in billions) | $1.5 | $3.2 | $7.7 | $15.1 |
| Federal transfer per poor person | $219 | $361 | $660 | $1139 |
| Federal cash transfer per poor person | $177 | $249 | $340 | $482 |
| Federal in-kind transfer per poor person | $42 | $112 | $320 | $657 |

[1] Source: United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Office of Program Systems, "Federal Outlays Benefiting the Poor—Summary Tables," (March 1974), Table 1.

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fining poverty. If a $1000 cash transfer to a poor person—who proceeds to spend it on food, housing, and medical care—reduces poverty, then so does $1000 worth of these goods provided outright (or at subsidized prices). When in-kind transfers (exclusive of public education provided by state and local governments) are counted as income, the average poor family in 1973 had an income that was approximately 30 per cent *above* the poverty line.[1] In terms of the average income of officially poor families, there is practically no poverty—statistically speaking—in the United States today, and, indeed, there has not been for several years. It only remains for our accounting procedures to be modified to record this achievement.

Many people object to an emphasis on the number of poor Americans because the poverty lines are fixed in terms of real incomes. Consequently, a poverty-level income falls as a percentage of average income when the average rises over time as a result of economic growth. This suggests that it may be better to consider what happens to the incomes of poor people relative to the incomes of others. Table II shows a popular method of looking at the relative distribution of income. It gives the share of total money income received by families whose incomes place them in the lowest 20 per cent (lowest quintile) of the income distribution, the second lowest quintile, and so on. Not only do these figures suggest a large degree of inequality in each year, but, of more interest, they indicate that the shares of income received by the various quintiles have changed remarkably little over this 20-year period. It is this distribution which has led many observers to conclude that the distribution of income has not become significantly more equal since World War II.

This conclusion is, however, almost certainly wrong. Once again, a major part of the problem is that the Census Bureau's measures of income are based on a definition that includes only money incomes, and excludes in-kind transfers and benefits of public edu-

[1] For a fuller discussion of the statistics concerning income distribution, see my *Redistribution and the Welfare System* (American Enterprise Institute, 1975), and "The Trend Toward Equality in the Distribution of Net Income," *Southern Economic Journal* (forthcoming). This estimate (as well as the ones given in Table III) counts as income in-kind transfers valued at market cost. Since an in-kind transfer may be worth less to the recipient than its market value, these estimates do not purport to measure benefits. It should be stressed, however, that the money income figures in Table II also do not measure benefits, since people may be led to spend their money incomes in ways they would prefer not to if their decisions had not been distorted by various provisions in the tax laws.

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TABLE II. *Relative Income Distribution (Expressed as Percentage Share of Total Money Income Received by Families, by Quintile)* [1]

| YEAR | LOWEST QUINTILE | SECOND QUINTILE | THIRD QUINTILE | FOURTH QUINTILE | HIGHEST QUINTILE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 | 4.9 | 12.2 | 17.1 | 23.5 | 42.2 |
| 1962 | 5.0 | 12.1 | 17.6 | 24.0 | 41.3 |
| 1972 | 5.4 | 11.9 | 17.5 | 23.9 | 41.4 |

[1] Source: United States Bureau of the Census, "Money Income in 1972 of Families and Persons in the United States," *Current Population Reports*, series P-60, No. 90 (1973), Table 16.

cation. In addition, the figures are based on incomes before payment of direct personal taxes, and no adjustment is made for differences in average family size among the quintiles. Table III gives the percentage shares received by quintiles after adding in-kind transfers and education, subtracting income and social security taxes, and converting to a per capita distribution. As shown in Table III, the distribution of income is much more equal than the Census figures in Table II suggest. In 1972, for example, the adjustments more than double the share of the lowest quintile, raising it from 5.4 to 11.7 per cent.

Not only is the distribution of income more equal in each year than is indicated by the Census figures, but there has also been a marked trend towards equality over the 20-year period. This is particularly apparent for the lowest quintile, whose share rose from 8.1 per cent in 1952 to 11.7 per cent in 1972, an improvement of 44 per cent in the relative position of low-income families. Most of this gain occurred since 1962, largely as a result of the expansion of education benefits and in-kind transfers. In fact, by 1972 government transfers had become the largest source of income for low-income families. More than two thirds (about $50 billion) of the net income of families in the lowest quintile was in the form of cash transfers, education benefits, and in-kind transfers.

TABLE III. *Adjusted Relative Income Distribution (Expressed as Percentage Share of Income Received by Quintile)* [1]

| YEAR | LOWEST QUINTILE | SECOND QUINTILE | THIRD QUINTILE | FOURTH QUINTILE | HIGHEST QUINTILE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 | 8.1 | 14.2 | 17.8 | 23.2 | 36.7 |
| 1962 | 8.8 | 14.4 | 18.2 | 23.1 | 35.4 |
| 1972 | 11.7 | 15.0 | 18.2 | 22.3 | 32.8 |

[1] Source: Derived from estimates presented in my "The Trend Toward Equality in the Distribution of Net Income," *Southern Economic Journal* (forthcoming).

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### Incentives and marginal tax rates

Of the many factors to consider in evaluating redistributive programs, none is more important than the impact on the incentives of taxpayers and transfer recipients to continue producing income. If incentives are dulled sufficiently, the outcome is a reduction in the total size of the income "pie," and more equal shares of a smaller total can result in lower incomes for taxpayers and transfer recipients alike. The most common way tax and transfer programs affect incentives is through the application of high marginal tax rates to income. To understand why, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between *marginal* and *average* tax rates.

Suppose the government wishes to collect $4000 in taxes from a person earning $20,000. It can set out to accomplish this by exempting $15,000 (so taxable income is $5000) and applying a flat rate tax of 80 per cent on taxable income. If the person continues to earn $20,000, he will pay $4000 in taxes. Thus his average tax rate is 20 per cent; however, his marginal tax rate is 80 per cent—i.e., for each additional dollar earned above $15,000, the taxpayer keeps only 20¢. To illustrate the relationship between high marginal tax rates and work incentives, note that if the taxpayer earns $5000 less, his taxes *fall* by $4000. Thus, by sacrificing only $1000 in net income he could take a vacation for a fourth of the year. In this way high marginal tax rates make it much less expensive for a person to earn less—that is, they weaken the incentive to continue expending as much effort to acquire income. Average tax rates may also have some independent effect, but it is high marginal tax rates that are most likely to undermine incentives. As we shall see, redistributive programs usually involve extremely high marginal tax rates, even though average tax rates may be relatively low.

High marginal tax rates are often applied to beneficiaries of government transfers, but these rates are usually hidden in the benefit structure of the program. If the transfer a family receives is reduced when family income is increased, then this reduction in benefits has exactly the same effect as a marginal tax rate applied to income. Suppose, as is actually true in several programs, that the transfer received is reduced by $1 for every $2 earned. Then when earnings increase by $2, disposable income goes up by only $1, exactly the same as when a 50 per cent marginal tax rate is applied to earnings.

In terms of marginal tax rates, a policy of complete equality implies marginal tax rates of 100 per cent for everyone. In this case, a person's net income would not increase if he earned more

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and would not fall if he earned less, or even if he earned nothing. Thus, there would be no financial incentive for anyone to work. It is an understanding of the full implications of this that has led most scholars to conclude that marginal tax rates must be kept well below 100 per cent to preserve adequate incentives. This, of course, is tantamount to concluding that complete equality is undesirable.

I have been emphasizing how marginal tax rates tend to weaken work incentives of both taxpayers and transfer recipients. Actually, high marginal tax rates are inimical to productivity in general, and not just to the amount of time people work. Consider a few examples of other types of incentives that can be undermined by high marginal tax rates. The incentive to undertake job training or get a good education is weakened since the student will get to keep only part of the higher income that a better education makes possible. Insofar as the return to savings is also subject to tax, the flow of savings, so important to economic growth, can be adversely affected by high marginal tax rates. Occupational choices can also be influenced: People will be led to take lower paying jobs that do not involve as much risk or responsibility. Earlier retirement, longer vacations, and lower labor-force participation by secondary workers are other plausible responses to high rates. Greater conversion of income into nontaxable forms (through the use of tax loopholes), and even emigration to other countries can result when the tax rates get high enough, as has recently been the case in England. Thus, there are many ways a person can utilize his skills and resources to maintain and increase his income, and high marginal rates affect all these activities. Although it is convenient to conceptualize the problem by thinking in terms of work incentives, it should not be forgotten that the incentives issue really relates to productive activity in general.

### The impact on low-income families

As a result of the multitude of tax and transfer programs now in existence, marginal tax rates are already very high for most people, but especially for those with very high and very low incomes. Before explaining how high the rates are, it should be stressed that the marginal tax rate relevant for incentives is the combined rate which results from all the separate taxes and transfer programs applied to a family. As an example, a family in a 20-per-cent federal income tax bracket and a five-per-cent state income tax brack-

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et is subject to an effective marginal tax rate of 25 per cent, and it is this rate that is instrumental in affecting its economic behavior.

Since federal, state, and local taxes combined are now 35 per cent of net national product (national income), it seems clear that many taxpayers face marginal tax rates approaching 50 per cent. (Marginal rates will often be higher than this overall average rate of 35 per cent due to progressivity in the tax system.) Effective marginal tax rates are probably lowest for families with incomes near the average of about $15,000, but even at this income level, the combined effect of federal and state income taxes, social security, sales, excise, and property taxes will produce rates of at least 35 per cent. At higher income levels, effective rates will be even higher, perhaps reaching 60 per cent for a relatively few families. Most upper-income families are probably confronted with rates in the neighborhood of 40 to 50 per cent, however.

Therefore, effective marginal tax rates are already quite high for middle-income and upper-income families, ranging between 35 and 50 per cent, with a small proportion paying still higher rates.[2] As high as these rates are, however, low-income families are paying even higher marginal tax rates!

The major reason low-income families face higher marginal tax rates than most other Americans is that poor families receive numerous transfers that are inversely related to their incomes. As pointed out earlier, when the amount of assistance falls as a family's own income increases, this is equivalent to applying a marginal tax rate on income. There has been a substantial growth in programs of this type in recent years. The more important of these programs are food stamps, housing subsidies, medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security. The implicit marginal tax rates used, of course, vary among these programs. Housing subsidies typically use a rate of 25 per cent, Supplemental Security Income a rate of 50 per cent, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a rate of 67 per cent.

The individual rates in these programs are fairly high, but the effective rates for most low-income families can be even higher, for two reasons. First, low-income families also pay explicit taxes in the form of social security taxes, sales taxes, and so on. Second, and becoming increasingly important, many families are receiving

[2] I have examined in more detail the effective marginal tax rates confronting families that pay federal income taxes at different income levels in "The Marginal Cost of Public Funds," *Journal of Political Economy* (forthcoming).

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benefits from several transfer programs simultaneously. As an example, a family receiving food stamps, with the implicit marginal tax rate of 25 to 30 per cent, will still pay social security, excise, sales, and possibly state income and other taxes. As a result, the effective marginal tax rate would be about 45 per cent. Even though this family may have an income too low to be subject to the federal income tax, its effective tax rate exceeds that of most middle-income and upper-income families. For families receiving transfers from other programs, and especially when a family receives aid from more than one program, effective marginal tax rates can exceed 70 and even 80 per cent.

It is a difficult matter to generalize about the "typical" effective marginal tax rate for low-income families since the rate can be expected to vary with the type and number of transfers received. Nevertheless, the rates for most families are clearly very high. A family receiving only food stamps faces a rate of about 45 per cent, while most families receiving aid under other programs, or a combination of programs, will face even higher rates. Recognizing the wide variation among families, my guess is that 65 per cent is the effective marginal tax rate confronting the "average" low-income family.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let me repeat that we are considering marginal, not average, tax rates. The average tax rate for low-income families is a large negative number, reflecting the very considerable net redistribution in their favor. Thus, they are not "burdened" in the usual sense by the high marginal rates they pay. Instead, this high rate is simply a consequence of the redistribution taking place through the various welfare programs. While the marginal rate is relevant in evaluating the incentive effects of the system, it is the average rate which is a better indication of the effects on the welfare of the recipients.

At present, then, effective marginal tax rates are already very high, especially for low-income families. Additional redistribution will produce surprisingly large increases in these rates, both for taxpayers and recipients, as we shall see.

## The effects of redistribution

That a greater volume of redistribution would result in higher marginal tax rates is obvious, but the exact relationship between the amount of redistribution and the necessary rate increases is far from obvious. Many observers of American society have implied

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that our wealthy society could easily afford to redistribute another, say, one or two per cent of national income to low-income families. Yet redistributing even one per cent more will probably require marginal tax rates to rise by at least 10 percentage points for most, and possibly all, families. It may appear surprising that transferring only one per cent of national income to low-income families would lead to such an increase in tax rates, and that is why it is worth considering the relationship in some detail.

It may help to begin with an example. Suppose transfers totaling one per cent of national income are made to families with income below $5000. Suppose further that these families have incomes averaging $3000, and that one per cent of national income will finance a transfer of $2000 per family. What this implies is that one per cent of national income is sufficient to raise every family with an income below $5000 up to $5000. In other words, we could make a transfer of $5000 to a family with no income of its own, a transfer of $4000 to a family with a $1000 income, and so on up to a transfer of $1 to a family with $4999. Note that this describes a transfer program with a marginal tax rate of 100 per cent; the transfer falls by a dollar for every dollar of additional earnings. Thus, when we attempt to concentrate a seemingly small proportion of national income on a relatively small number of low-income families, the impact on their marginal tax rates can be surprisingly great. Although the numbers chosen are hypothetical, they do represent fairly accurately the true nature of the problem.

It might be felt that a different type of transfer program would not require marginal rates of 100 per cent. For instance, suppose that a transfer of exactly $2000 is made to every family with income below $5000. A family with a zero income would receive $2000 and so would a family with $5000, thus implying a zero marginal tax rate; benefits don't fall with income. Is this a way to avoid the incentive problem? As long as we are considering a redistribution only to families with incomes below $5,000, the answer to this question is definitely no. The incentive difficulties are just shifted to a different income range. Note that, under this scheme, a family with $5000 earned income would have a net income of $7000, but families earning from $5001 to $6999 would actually have lower net incomes, since they would receive no transfers. Not only is this inequitable, but it creates a tremendous incentive for all those earning between $5000 and $7000, as well as some earning above $7000, to reduce their earnings to $5000 and

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collect a $2000 transfer. The abrupt termination of transfer payments at $5000 creates what is called a "notch" problem, indicating the discontinuity in the relationship between earned and net income that occurs at $5000. Most analysts agree that the consequences of such "notches," both for equity and efficiency, are worse than the high marginal tax rates that they only seem, on a superficial inspection, to avoid.

To avoid such a notch at $5000, the transfer per family must be gradually tapered off until it ultimately reaches zero when family income reaches $5000. It is this gradual tapering off of the transfer payment that produces the marginal tax rate in the program. And when transfers are made only to low-income families, the transfer must be reduced very rapidly as income rises, to make sure the transfer falls to zero at the "breakeven income level" (the income level at which the net transfer is zero) of $5000. Hence, the marginal tax rate in such a program will then tend to be very high.

As long as transfers are to be made only to families with incomes below a relatively low level, like $5000, any substantial redistribution implies either very high marginal tax rates or a "notch" problem, which is just as bad. This should explain why the tax rates are so high for low-income families in the United States. The high rates are simply the inevitable consequences of concentrating sizable transfers on these families. It will be recalled that the marginal tax rate for the average low-income family is probably about 65 per cent, even though only about four per cent of national income is being redistributed to families in the lowest quintile of the income distribution.

### The costs of redistribution

Now that we understand why tax rates of recipients are so sensitive to the amount redistributed, we can move on from our hypothetical example to the actual situation in the United States. Suppose, then, that we wish to redistribute one per cent more of national income to families in the lowest 20 per cent of the income distribution. One per cent of national income is $13 billion, an average of about $1200 per family for the 11 million families in the lowest quintile. This group contains families with money incomes below approximately $7000 (but net incomes including in-kind transfers would be higher), and these families now face a wide range of marginal tax rates that average about 65 per cent. How

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high must marginal tax rates rise with an additional redistribution of $13 billion? By now, perhaps, it will come as no surprise to learn that marginal rates would have to rise to approximately 100 per cent, or slightly more. I do not think it is necessary to belabor the point that the economic effects—not to mention the social and political ones—of such high rates would be unacceptable. Thus, given the present size of the United States welfare system, any substantial additional redistribution concentrated on the lowest quintile would result in prohibitively high marginal tax rates.

There is one way to redistribute more to low-income families without such a great increase in their tax rates, and that is to extend transfer payments to families with incomes above $7000. By raising the "breakeven income" of the additional redistribution, the transfer payment per family can be tapered off more gradually as income rises, thus implying a smaller increment in marginal tax rates. For example, we might redistribute an additional one per cent of national income to families with incomes below $10,000, thereby using a breakeven income of $10,000 instead of $7000. However, this program would still require marginal rates to rise by 15 percentage points for all families with incomes below $10,000. For low-income families the increase is from 65 per cent to 80 per cent, and for families close to $10,000, from about 35 per cent to 50 per cent. Even these rates raise very serious questions, especially since more than a third of all American families have incomes below $10,000. In my judgment, rates this high pose a danger of seriously undermining incentives that is too great to be acceptable.

By raising the breakeven income still higher, the required increments in rates can be mitigated further. With one per cent of national income redistributed to families with incomes below the average family income of $15,000, the required increase in marginal tax rates is five percentage points. Thus, rates would go from 65 to 70 per cent for low-income families and from about 35 to 40 per cent for most other families with incomes below the average. This increase would weaken somewhat further the incentives for the 55 per cent of the population with incomes below the average, but perhaps the greater equality is worth this cost. In judging whether this is so, however, it should be pointed out that only part of this redistribution goes to low-income families. In fact, with one per cent of national income redistributed in this way, somewhat less than one half of one percent would go to the lowest quintile. The result would be an increase of only about six per cent in the net

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income of these families, hardly a dramatic improvement in their living standards.

It turns out to be a difficult task, then, to redistribute substantially more to low-income families. Either tax rates for these families must be increased to nearly 100 per cent, or else transfers must be extended far up into the middle-income range with a still significant increment in marginal rates for all recipients. If we wish to redistribute one per cent more of national income to low-income families, it will probably be necessary to redistribute a total of two per cent, with half of that going to the nonpoor, and marginal tax rates would then increase by 10 percentage points for all these families.

So far we have been examining the impact of redistribution on the marginal tax rates of the recipients, and we have seen that the higher the breakeven income at which transfers cease, the lower the required increments in rates. The opposite is true for the taxpayers: When the breakeven income is raised, the required increment in marginal tax rates is increased. In part, this reflects the fact that a higher breakeven income implies a smaller number of families with incomes above that level to finance the transfers. More importantly, a higher breakeven income reduces the taxable income of all those above, thus requiring a higher rate to raise the necessary revenue. In other words, if the breakeven income is raised from $7000 to $10,000, families with incomes above $10,000 would have their taxable incomes fall by $3000, since only income in excess of $10,000 is taxable. This, by the way, is necessary if we are to avoid the "notch" problem.

To redistribute an additional one per cent of national income to those below $7000 would require increases of two percentage points in the marginal rates of those above $7000 to raise the necessary revenue. With a breakeven income of $10,000, the required increase is about three percentage points. These increases are not unduly great, and it is only when we look at the increases for those below the breakeven income that the entire package appears unattractive. When the breakeven income is $15,000, marginal tax rates would have to rise by five percentage points for those making more than $15,000 to raise one per cent of national income in tax revenue. In other words, redistributing one per cent of national income from those above the average to those below requires the marginal tax rates of all families, both taxpayers and recipients, to rise by five percentage points. If we wish to redistribute one per cent to low-income families, a total of two per

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cent of national income must be redistributed, and marginal rates must rise by 10 percentage points for recipients and taxpayers both. This would imply marginal tax rates in excess of 50 per cent for most American families.

The fundamental issue is whether greater equality is worth the cost in reduced incentives produced by these substantial increases in marginal tax rates. I do not pretend to know how responsive Americans would be to the diminution in incentives implied by a 10 percentage point increase in marginal rates, but there is clearly cause for some concern. It should be mentioned that the additional damage done by each successive increment in marginal tax rates tends to be greater than the last. A familiar proposition in economics is that the harm due to weakened incentive tends to increase with the square of the effective marginal tax rate. Thus, doubling the tax rate will at least quadruple the cost. To see this intuitively, consider a marginal tax rate of 50 per cent. This will weaken incentives somewhat compared to a zero tax rate, but it is conceivable that the effects will be moderate. (After all, some high-income and low-income families are still working, despite rates that are already this high.) If, however, the rate is increased to 100 per cent there is no doubt that incentives would virtually be destroyed. Increasing the rate from zero to 50 per cent may therefore have only a moderate effect, but increasing it by another 50 percentage points will surely have catastrophic results. This suggests that there is some critical point beyond which pushing rates still higher would be extremely harmful. Unfortunately, no one knows exactly where this point is, but before rates for most American families are pushed above 50 per cent some serious attention should be given to the question.

## How greater equality can increase inequality

Most redistributive programs involve transferring resources from families with high money incomes to families with lower money incomes. It is often taken for granted that the result is a more equal distribution of income. Of course, money incomes become more equally distributed, but it is not obvious that the distribution of real income becomes more equal. For a variety of reasons, differences in money incomes among families do not necessarily imply a difference in real incomes. This poses a very difficult problem for the evaluation of policies that tend to equalize money incomes. A few examples will indicate the nature of the problem.

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If we consider a group of people with equal abilities to earn income, their actual earnings may nonetheless differ quite widely as a result of differences in their preferences. Some people, for instance, may choose to become teachers even though they could have received a higher money income by working for a private business. In such a case, the difference in money income between teachers and business employees is called an "equalizing income differential." This means that a difference in money incomes is necessary to make the net attractiveness of the jobs equal—that is, to make real incomes equal. Many differences in money income are equalizing income differentials that simply reflect differences in the attractiveness of different jobs. When this is the case, equalization of money incomes implies disequalization of real incomes. If teachers and business employees have the same money income, the teachers would have higher real incomes: equal money incomes plus a job they consider more attractive.

Another way preferences can lead to different money incomes concerns the amount of leisure time (meaning all time not spent working for money wages) that families have. Of two people who can work at the same wage rate, one may choose to work shorter hours than the other because he values leisure more highly (or, equivalently, dislikes work more). There would be a difference in money incomes, but most of us would agree that their real incomes are the same. In short, leisure time is a valuable consumption item, and should be considered a part of a person's real income. In addition to different hours of work in different jobs, two significant sources of variation in leisure time deserve explicit mention, since they are easily overlooked: the retirement decision and the decision of several members of a family to work. Retirement is an explicit decision to sacrifice money income in return for more leisure, just as is the decision of a wife to work in the home rather than for money wages in the market. Both phenomena lead to differences in money incomes in some situations where real incomes are not different.

The amount of leisure time consumed by families varies widely. Some indication of the relative magnitudes can be obtained by noting that the average number of earners per family in the lowest quintile is 0.85, and rises steadily with income until the average is 2.26 earners per family in the highest quintile. Unfortunately, these figures do not distinguish between earners who work different hours: Anyone who earns at least $1 per year is considered an earner. Thus, the figures should be interpreted with some

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care, but they do suggest that families with low money incomes consume larger amounts of leisure time. This should come as no surprise, since just under 50 per cent of families in the lowest quintile have family heads either under 24 years of age or over 65, age groups with a high incidence of school attendance and retirement. In the highest quintile less than eight per cent of family heads are in these age groups.

Another major source of differences in money incomes is the use of a one-year accounting period in the measurement of income. Two people may have unequal incomes in a given year, but their lifetime incomes can be identical. A person who goes to work after leaving high school will normally have a higher income at age 20 than his friend who attends college, but the reverse will probably be true 20 years later. Nevertheless, both may have the same lifetime incomes, especially when the cost of the college education is considered as a cost of the graduate's future income.

In general, incomes tend to rise with age up to about age 55, and then decline. The median income in 1972 of families headed by a person in the 14-to-24 age class was $7447, while for the 45-to-54 age class the median was nearly double, $14,056. Above age 65 the median was $5968. Comparing people of different ages can give a misleading impression of inequality. Note that a redistribution plan based on money income would, in part, transfer income from those of middle age to those who are younger. Yet certainly the average young family today will have a higher, not lower, lifetime income than the average middle-aged family. Not only will age and experience work to increase the young family's income in the future, but so too will economic growth. In all likelihood, by the time a young family today reaches middle age, the median income of middle-aged families will be at least $20,000.

While still other examples could be given. I think these suffice to make the point that differences in annual money incomes are not an accurate guide to differences in real economic position. In some cases, inequality in money income is consistent with equality in real income, and in other cases equality in money income is consistent with inequality in real income. Recognition of this has important implications for the ethical desirability of plans to produce greater equality in money incomes: Equalizing money incomes will, in many instances, produce greater inequality in real incomes. I take it for granted that any major real world redistribution will be based largely on annual money incomes since almost all discussions of inequality proceed in these terms. At any

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rate, I would not wish to have government use its discretionary power to tax me based on what bureaucrats think my "real" income is. Although it may be wise to limit the taxing power of government by restricting it to easily measurable tax bases like money income, it must be admitted that this implies government redistribution will be a clumsy device for achieving equality in any meaningful sense.

Recognizing these factors, it may still be argued that they are not overwhelmingly significant. If we transfer money from a family with an income of $50,000 to a family with an income of $5,000, could we really believe that this would produce greater inequality in real incomes? Of course not. When considering the extremes of the income distribution, the factors discussed in this section are probably overwhelmed by the great differences in money incomes.

This does not mean, however, that the problem is unimportant. As I emphasized in the previous section, it is simply not feasible to concentrate more resources solely on low-income families, because of the implications for the marginal tax rates of recipients. Instead, additional redistribution in the United States today is almost certain to involve considerable shifting around of money incomes in the middle-income classes. The ethical justification for this redistribution is questionable, and with about 70 per cent of all families having incomes between half and double the average income, the problem is anything but unimportant.

### "Demogrant" plans

The quantitative significance of the points I have been raising can be more fully appreciated by evaluating two recent proposals for redistribution. First, consider the proposal for a cash transfer program, sometimes called a "universal demogrant." This type of program has received considerable attention since Senator McGovern advocated the adoption of a variant in the 1972 Presidential campaign.

Basically, the demogrant approach involves the payment of an equal transfer to all families of a given size. Thus, every family of four might receive $4000 regardless of the family's own income or assets. Since there is no implicit marginal tax rate in the benefit schedule—the transfer doesn't fall at higher income levels—it might appear that the tax rate problem is avoided by this approach. Actually, that is not so. Such a program requires high tax rates to finance it, and when the transfer and taxes are consid-

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ered together, it is obvious that the net transfer does fall at higher income levels.

Benjamin Okner has recently considered in detail the distributional implications of several demogrant plans.[3] Table IV describes two of the plans he examined. Total outlays on these plans are quite large, as both involve (based on 1970 data) expenditures of over $200 billion. However, the total outlays do not measure the actual redistribution since families will be paying added taxes as well as receiving transfers, and it is the net effect that counts. In fact, the net redistribution is less than a fourth of the gross outlays.

TABLE IV. *Redistribution under Two Demogrant Plans (1970 data)*[1]

| | PLAN B | PLAN D |
|---|---|---|
| Amount of demogrant | | |
| Single person | $1500 | $1250 |
| Married couple, no children | $3000 | $1250 |
| Married couple, two children | $3600 | $4000 |
| Total outlays (in billions) | $215.4 | $200.7 |
| Federal income tax rate (after comprehensive reform) | 42.2% | 40.2% |
| Net redistribution (in billions) | $47.0 | $45.3 |

[1] Source: United States Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Subcommitee on Fiscal Policy, *Studies in Public Welfare*, Paper No. 9, 93rd Congress, 1st session, (November 1973). A study of "The Role of Demogrants as an Income Maintenance Alternative," by Benjamin A. Okner, Table 1.

Okner examined the financing of these plans by assuming that the federal income tax would provide the revenue. However, given the current definition of taxable income—which makes taxable income less than total income because of deductions and exemptions—marginal tax rates exceeding 70 per cent would have been required to raise the necessary revenue. To avoid this, Okner assumed that a broadened tax base was used—in effect, disallowing virtually all deductions, exemptions, and exclusions to increase taxable income by 70 per cent. On this comprehensive tax base, he found that a flat rate tax of 42.2 per cent was required to finance Plan B, and a tax of 40.2 per cent for Plan D. This would be the marginal tax rate of the federal income tax that would apply to all families, rich and poor alike, since there would be almost no income exempt from taxation.

The effective marginal tax rates would be substantially higher.

[3] Benjamin A. Okner, "The Role of Demogrants as an Income Maintenance Alternative," *Studies in Public Welfare*, Paper No. 9 (Joint Economic Committee, 1973).

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Actually, taxes other than the federal income tax accounted for 25 per cent of national income in 1970. Taking this figure as a rough estimate of the marginal rate due to other taxes, the effective marginal tax rates for these programs would be 65-67 per cent. Even this is likely to understate the rates for many families, since some low-income families would be confronted with additional tax rates in remaining transfer programs. Moreover, if a progressive rate structure were used in the federal income tax, or if other taxes were progressive on balance, marginal tax rates on upper-income families would be higher. It is likely, then, that effective marginal tax rates for most families would exceed 70 per cent.

The increases in marginal tax rates produced by these plans are not so clear, however, because of the significant tax reform that Okner assumed accompanied the demogrants. A fairly good idea of the impact can be obtained by assuming that the broadened tax base was used with a flat rate tax before the demogrants were introduced. In 1970, a flate rate tax of 12 per cent on this broader base would have produced the same revenue that the federal income tax raised that year. Thus, adopting the demogrant plans would have increased the rate from 12 per cent to 40 to 42 per cent, or by 28 to 30 percentage points. Since these plans redistribute just over five per cent of national income, marginal tax rates are increased by slightly more than five percentage points for each per cent of national income redistributed.

For these high tax rates we would receive a substantial redistribution of income: $47 billion with plan B and $45.3 billion with Plan D. However, less than a third of these sums is redistributed to the lowest quintile. According to Okner's detailed estimates, Plan B raises the share of the lowest quintile by 1.7 percentage points, while the gain is only 1.4 percentage points for Plan D. Thus, most of the redistribution takes place within the middle-income and upper-income classes. As was mentioned earlier, this is a virtual necessity for any large-scale redistribution, and it makes the ethical questions discussed quite important. For low-income families we get a gain of about one and a half per cent of national income at a cost of a 28-30 percentage point increase in marginal rates for all families.

It should be pointed out that the estimates given above, as well the ones mentioned earlier, are based on the assumption that family incomes are not reduced in response to higher tax rates. If reductions do occur, then the same tax rates would raise less revenue. In this event, raising marginal tax rates by 28-30 per-

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centage points to finance the demogrant would actually redistribute less than the figures given in Table IV. Since some reduction in incomes is surely to be expected, the estimates given can be considered to be conservative indications of the difficulty of financing such programs.

### A hypothetical transfer

For our second redistribution plan, consider the proposal made by Arthur Okun in *Equality and Efficiency*:

> First, consider the American families who make up the bottom 20 per cent of the income distribution. Their after-tax incomes in 1974 were less than $7000, averaging about $5000. Now consider the top five per cent of families in the income pyramid; they had after-tax incomes ranging upward from about $28,000, and averaging about $45,000. A proposal is made to levy an added tax averaging $4000 (about nine per cent) on the income of the affluent families in an effort to aid the low-income families. Since the low-income group I selected has four times as many families as the affluent group, that should, in principle, finance a $1000 grant for the average low-income family.[4]

Okun does not intend this to be a proposal for an actual program; rather, he presents it so the reader can test his attitudes toward redistribution. In particular, Okun asks the reader to consider how large the inefficiency in such a program could be and still be considered a desirable transfer.

The hypothetical income transfer is well designed to elicit a favorable response from the reader. By emphasizing a transfer from the very top to the very bottom, doubts about whether real incomes are made more equal are not very troublesome. Instead, the real problem with this income transfer is the marginal tax rates it would require. But Okun did not raise this issue at all.

For the low-income families, marginal tax rates would be pushed up to about 100 percent. (Incidentally, the figures given by Okun are for money incomes. When in-kind transfers are included, the average income of this group would be well above $5000—probably quite close to $7000, in fact.) The aggregate transfer to low-income families is just below one per cent, and we have already explained why a transfer of that size necessitates such a high tax rate. Had Okun realized this, I doubt that he would have presented his example as a feasible policy alternative.

[4] Arthur M. Okun, *Equality and Efficiency* (The Brookings Institution, 1975), p. 91

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Also of interest is the increase in tax rates for affluent families. The average amount of income in excess of $28,000 for such families is $17,000, according to Okun's figures. An average of $4000 must be collected from this, thus requiring a supplemental marginal tax rate of 24 per cent. (Only incomes above $28,000 can be taxed; otherwise the "notch" problem occurs.) Since current marginal tax rates of this group are, at a minimum, 40-45 per cent, and range upwards to 60 per cent or so, this income transfer would produce effective marginal tax rates in the 65-80 per cent range. Most upper income taxpayers would probably be confronted with rates of 70 to 75 per cent.

What would be the impact of this dramatic increase in marginal tax rates? I would expect a significant reduction in earnings by these families, and also a conversion of income into forms that are not taxable (through the use of tax loopholes). Over the long run, probably fewer families would acquire the skills, shoulder the responsibilities, and make the effort necessary to move into this income class. The size of these effects is uncertain but the reactions do not need to be at all large to make the income transfer program counterproductive. It would not be unreasonable, for example, to expect taxable incomes to fall by 10 per cent. Yet if incomes fell by this amount, tax revenues collected from these families would not go up at all! The higher tax rates applied to a 10 per cent lower tax base would produce just the same revenue as the present system, and there would be no additional funds to transfer to low-income families. High-income families would be worse off, and no one would gain.

Thus, the implications of Okun's hypothetical transfer for both low-income and high-income families raise serious doubts about its feasibility. And the program would—assuming no reductions in income—redistribute less than one per cent of national income. The difficulty of transferring income from the very top to the bottom tends to support my earlier conclusion that any additional redistribution will involve considerable redistribution within the broad middle-income range, as well as substantially higher marginal tax rates for everyone.

## How far is enough?

Given the current system of taxes and transfers, in order to redistribute an additional one per cent of national income to low-income families a total redistribution of at least two per cent is

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required, and this will necessitate an increase in marginal tax rates of 10 percentage points for all families. These conclusions raise both ethical and practical questions. The ethical questions pertain to the justification for massive redistribution within middle-income classes, and the practical questions relate to the impact of substantially higher tax rates on economic incentives. On both grounds, serious doubts are raised concerning the desirability of further redistribution. Furthermore, a gain of one per cent of national income by low-income families would only raise their net incomes by about 12 per cent. It is worth pointing out that economic growth at rates experienced in the past (but not the very recent past) will raise incomes of low-income families by this much every three or four years, without increases in marginal tax rates.

For those who believe the economy is going to continue churning out more and more goods and services, regardless of the incentives confronting the producers (the people), the considerations emphasized here will probably do little to dampen their enthusiasm for more government measures to redistribute income. Since current trends suggest government activity in this area will continue to grow, I can only hope that incentives are, in fact, not appreciably dulled by substantially higher marginal tax rates. But, like most economists, I have developed a healthy respect for the responsiveness of people to economic incentives; and with effective marginal tax rates nearing 50 per cent for most American families, I think there are grounds for some concern.

For years, countless reformers have been urging the adoption of measures to produce a more equal distribution of income. The call is always for more equality than we now have, but seldom is the issue of exactly how much more equality is desirable faced squarely. Since we have gone quite far in equalizing incomes in recent years, now is an appropriate time to consider this fundamental question. It may be that we have gone far enough.

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# Equality, opportunity, and the "good job"

BRADLEY R. SCHILLER

THE accumulated evidence suggests that the distribution of income has been remarkably immune to major changes in economic conditions and public policy. Even the cataclysm of the Great Depression caused only a modest change in the relative shares of the rich and poor. In 1947, the richest 20 per cent of all families received 43 per cent of total income, while the poorest 20 per cent received only 5.0 per cent; in 1974, the income pie was distributed much the same way, with the richest getting 41 per cent of the total income and the poorest getting only 5.4 per cent. During the period from 1947 to 1974, we not only experienced at least five business cycles but also experienced a tremendous growth of government programs designed to redistribute both incomes and opportunities.

The observed rigidity of the income distribution is a serious challenge to our concepts of equality and opportunity. In particular, the available evidence seems to lend credence to the double indictment, formulated by the "radical" Left, that the American economy is characterized by a highly stratified structure of status and opportunity, and that the vast expansion of "liberal" government programs since 1946 (or even 1936) has only served to solidify and rationalize that structure. Indeed, the increasing tendency of both

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the Ford Administration and its "liberal" critics to debunk and dismantle the social programs of the last two decades amounts to a plea of *nolo contendere* to the radicals' charges.

Before accepting the above indictment, however, we should consider alternative interpretations of the evidence. It is possible, in fact, that the observed rigidity of the distribution of income is entirely consistent with widespread opportunities for individuals to alter their own economic status. Indeed, the observed stability of the income shares received by the rich or the poor (or any other income group) really doesn't tell us anything about the extent of income mobility experienced by *individuals*—the essential test of socioeconomic opportunity. The radical critics tend to assume that the richest 20 per cent in 1974 are the same individuals (or their families) that were among the richest 20 per cent in 1947. Such an assumption allows one to conclude from the available evidence that our society is rigidly stratified. But there is another possible explanation: Individuals could be highly mobile across income classes, suggesting a "musical chairs" arrangement in which the position of the chairs themselves is the only thing that never changes. If this were true, then the fact that the chairs were always in the same place could not be construed as proof of rigid opportunity stratification; and the fact that some individuals frequently end up in the same chair as when they started is not nearly so important as the fact that everyone moves around while the music is playing.

The verdict on the extent of opportunity stratification in the American economy depends on evidence which has not previously been available. What must be determined is whether individuals do, in fact, move between different points of income distribution.

## Measuring mobility

To evaluate the extent of individual mobility across points of the income distribution, we must distinguish two potential sources of such movement. In the first place, individuals typically enjoy steady increases in wages and salaries as they grow older, as a consequence of both seniority and experience. Thus, most people move at least part way up the income distribution by simple virtue of the fact that they grow older. Although this kind of mobility is not completely irrelevant to the issue of opportunity stratification, it is not very meaningful.

But individuals may also move between income classes as a re-

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sult of the kinds of jobs they hold, the effort they put into their jobs, the kinds of talent they demonstrate, or simply the amount of good luck they experience. That is to say, it is possible for individuals of approximately the same age to experience very different rates of income growth, leading to widespread movement across points of the income distribution. Such mobility is a much better index of opportunity stratification. It is probably also the case that individuals tend to measure their own success or failure in such terms —i.e., that they gauge their status not in relation to all other individuals, but only in comparison to others of approximately the same age (and, possibly, sex and race).

The critical question, then, is whether individuals of approximately the same age exchange relative income positions with the passage of time. Are the same individuals always "richer" or "poorer" than their contemporaries, regardless of how hard they work or how much time elapses? Or could the people who are rich in one year be poor in another? In order to answer these questions we need to be in a position to observe how individuals' incomes change from year to year. But such longitudinal observations are impossible with conventional census data, and are frightfully expensive and unreliable to obtain from personal interview surveys. It is possible, however, to observe how individuals' *earnings* vary from year to year, as most wages and salaries are subject to social security taxes, and are thus reported regularly. Social security records provide the opportunity not only to observe how the earnings of an individual change from year to year, but also to compare such changes to those experienced by everyone else. The social security records allow us to determine who is "rich" or "poor" in any given year, and to observe the extent to which individuals move between such relative earnings positions. In view of the fact that annual earnings are the largest component of total income, as well as the largest source of variability in family incomes over time, such information goes a long way toward our objective of gauging the extent of opportunity stratification in the American economy.

The evidence I will review focuses on 74,227 male workers who earned at least $1,000 in 1957 and were still working in 1971.[1] What I will seek to determine is whether the "high" earners of 1957 were

[1] This is a random selection of workers with employment covered by social security legislation. The Longitudinal Employer-Employee Data (LEED) file, from which this sample was drawn, provides details on the earnings histories of a random one per cent of all covered workers. See my "Relative Earnings Mobility in the United States" (forthcoming).

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still the "high" earners in 1971, or whether they had exchanged relative positions with other workers.

The definition of "high" and "low" earnings is based on the distribution of earnings unique to each age group in each year. For example, Table I shows the earnings distribution in 1957 for all workers who were aged 30 to 34 at that time. A 32-year-old worker earning $16,000 in 1957 was among the top five per cent of workers in his age cohort, and thus qualified as a "high" earner. Now suppose that the same worker was earning $14,000 in 1971: He was still relatively well off in that year, but had slipped from the top of the earnings distribution (the first ventile[2]) to a point substantially further down (the third ventile). This loss of relative position is attributable, of course, to the fact that other workers in his age cohort had faster rates of earnings growth during the same period.

TABLE I. *Boundaries of Relative Earnings Positions for Males Aged 30 to 34 in 1957*[1]

| VENTILE[2] | 1957 | 1971 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | $9,502 and over | $17,665 and over |
| 2 | $7,453 – $9,501 | $14,956 – $17,664 |
| 3 | $6,745 – $7,452 | $13,430 – $14,955 |
| 4 | $6,253 – $6,744 | $12,311 – $13,429 |
| 5 | $5,851 – $6,252 | $11,528 – $12,310 |
| 6 | $5,522 – $5,850 | $10,842 – $11,527 |
| 7 | $5,220 – $5,521 | $10,220 – $10,841 |
| 8 | $4,933 – $5,219 | $ 9,632 – $10,219 |
| 9 | $4,654 – $4,932 | $ 9,067 – $ 9,631 |
| 10 | $4,371 – $4,653 | $ 8,501 – $ 9,066 |
| 11 | $4,092 – $4,370 | $ 7,945 – $ 8,500 |
| 12 | $3,812 – $4,091 | $ 7,443 – $ 7,944 |
| 13 | $3,497 – $3,811 | $ 6,906 – $ 7,442 |
| 14 | $3,073 – $3,496 | $ 6,193 – $ 6,905 |
| 15 | $2,623 – $3,072 | $ 5,398 – $ 6,192 |
| 16 | $2,106 – $2,622 | $ 4,449 – $ 5,397 |
| 17 | $1,540 – $2,105 | $ 3,373 – $ 4,448 |
| 18 | $ 915 – $1,539 | $ 2,160 – $ 3,372 |
| 19 | $ 343 – $ 914 | $ 854 – $ 2,159 |
| 20 | $ 1 – $ 342 | $ 1 – $ 853 |

[1] Source: Based on one per cent of all workers covered by social security, as depicted in the LEED file.
[2] Each ventile includes five per cent of all male workers aged 30 to 34 in 1957.

Statistics like those displayed in Table I can be used to measure the extent to which individual male workers actually moved across relative positions (ventiles) of the earnings distributions. For the

[2] Each ventile includes five per cent of all male workers.

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sake of convenience, a worker will be said to be "mobile" if he moves at least two ventiles up or down the earnings distribution. By this criterion, 71 per cent of all the workers were in fact mobile, suggesting a tremendous amount of fluidity in the socioeconomic structure.

The incidence of status change is not the only concern, however. Although relative status mobility is clearly a widespread phenomenon, it is possible that such mobility is narrowly constrained —i.e., that people move up and down the distribution of earnings, but by only small distances. This is not the case, though, as further examination of the data reveals. Indeed, the *average* move is 4.22 ventiles (21 percentiles) up or down the earnings distribution, or over one fifth of the way from one end of the distribution to the other (see Table II). Hence, mobility of relative status not only is a common experience, but also involves very large movements.

TABLE II. *Summary Measures of Mobility*[1]

| 1957 VENTILE[2] | PER CENT WHO ARE MOBILE | AVERAGE DISTANCE OF MOVES (IN VENTILES) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 52 | 4.12 |
| 2 | 58 | 4.51 |
| 3 | 69 | 4.75 |
| 4 | 72 | 4.56 |
| 5 | 73 | 4.45 |
| 6 | 75 | 4.34 |
| 7 | 75 | 4.27 |
| 8 | 76 | 3.93 |
| 9 | 76 | 3.92 |
| 10 | 76 | 3.82 |
| 11 | 77 | 4.05 |
| 12 | 76 | 3.98 |
| 13 | 75 | 4.13 |
| 14 | 74 | 4.08 |
| 15 | 74 | 4.31 |
| 16 | 70 | 4.04 |
| 17 | 67 | 4.01 |
| 18 | 65 | 4.26 |
| 19[3] | — | — |
| 20[3] | — | — |
| All ventiles | 71 | 4.22 |

[1] Source: Based on a sample of 74,227 workers, from the LEED file.
[2] Each ventile includes five per cent of all male workers aged 30 to 34 in 1957.
[3] Workers with earnings less than $1000 annually are omitted.

## From rags to riches?

Although the average distance of movement is impressive, we should also note that very few people make it all the way from

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one end of the distribution to the other in the short span of time (14 years) we are observing. Only 1.7 per cent of the workers who were at the lowest end of the distribution in 1957 made the fabled Horatio Alger climb to the highest end by 1971. Likewise, few (1.5 per cent) of those who began at the top of the income distribution in 1957 fell to its lowest points by 1971: There were as few riches-to-rags stories as rags-to-riches stories. But the absence of such extreme moves should not obscure the extensive mobility that is taking place throughout the distribution: The number of Horatio Alger stories is simply a poor measure of opportunity stratification.

Further evidence on this point is provided in Table II, which indicates the extent of mobility experienced by workers from different income classes. The most noteworthy observation in Table II is that high rates of mobility are experienced by *every* income class. The second phenomenon to note is the lower rates of mobility experienced by the lowest, and particularly the highest, earners. Note, for example, that nearly half (48 per cent) of the highest earners in 1957 managed to hold on to their lofty positions in 1971, while over one third of the lowest earners of 1957 were unable to move up the earnings distribution over the subsequent 14 years. These higher rates of immobility at the opposite ends of the distribution are suggestive of stratification, and clearly a basis for public concern. How are the "rich" able to hold their relative position so securely? Why are "poor" people significantly less mobile than others? Although such concerns should not be dismissed, it should be noted that these higher rates of immobility are "high" only by comparison: The fact that half of those who start at the top end up further down the distribution, while nearly two thirds of those who begin at the bottom later move up, constitutes irrefutable evidence of extensive fluidity in the socioeconomic structure. And the even higher rates of status mobility experienced by the vast majority of workers in the middle ranges of the distribution offer further evidence.

## Racial patterns

Although the available data on earnings suggest that status mobility characterizes the American economy better than rigid stratification, it might be asked whether these general patterns of mobility are shared equally by all groups of workers. In view of the continuing public concern with racial differences in status and

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opportunity, it seems particularly appropriate to ask whether black workers have shared equally in the patterns of mobility. That question is rendered even more interesting by the fact that the years in question (1957-71) encompass a period of tremendous judicial and legislative activity on behalf of equal opportunity. Hence, it might be anticipated not only that black workers experienced more mobility than white workers during this period, but also that they moved, on the average, to higher positions of the earnings distribution.

Unfortunately, however, the available evidence does not support these expectations. Although the same percentage of black workers as white workers (71 per cent) were "mobile," blacks tended to move smaller distances across the earnings distribution (3.7 ventiles versus 4.2 ventiles). This is particularly worrisome since black workers tended to start out at lower relative positions.

The racial patterns of mobility are indicated in Table III, which shows the experiences of white and black workers from different income classes in 1957. Notice, first of all, that black workers who began in the low end of the distribution were much less mobile

TABLE III. *Racial Patterns of Mobility*[1]

| 1957 VENTILE[2] | PER CENT OF WORKERS WHO ARE MOBILE | | AVERAGE MOVE (IN VENTILES) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | WHITE | BLACK | WHITE | BLACK |
| 1 | 52% | 93% | +4.12 | +7.21 |
| 2 | 58 | 90 | +4.19 | +7.97 |
| 3 | 69 | 84 | +4.27 | +7.68 |
| 4 | 72 | 85 | +3.73 | +6.83 |
| 5 | 73 | 85 | +3.30 | +6.10 |
| 6 | 75 | 83 | +2.82 | +5.15 |
| 7 | 75 | 80 | +2.32 | +4.44 |
| 8 | 76 | 77 | +1.48 | +2.20 |
| 9 | 76 | 74 | + .87 | +2.34 |
| 10 | 76 | 78 | + .54 | +1.76 |
| 11 | 77 | 77 | .31 | + .55 |
| 12 | 76 | 80 | .64 | + .67 |
| 13 | 75 | 74 | 1.33 | + .36 |
| 14 | 74 | 71 | 1.91 | .42 |
| 15 | 74 | 63 | 2.54 | .58 |
| 16 | 70 | 61 | 2.56 | .88 |
| 17 | 67 | 56 | 2.90 | 1.39 |
| 18 | 65 | 53 | 3.57 | 1.93 |
| 19[3] | — | — | — | — |
| 20[3] | — | — | — | — |
| All ventiles | 71 | 70 | + .93 | + .77 |

[1] Source: Based on a sample of 74,227 workers, from the LEED file.
[2] Each ventile includes five per cent of all male workers aged 30 to 34 in 1957.
[3] Workers with earnings less than $1000 annually are omitted.

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than white workers of the same status in 1957. On the other hand, blacks who were at the top of the income distribution in 1957 were extremely likely to fall to lower status positions, in contrast to white workers starting from the same point. Taken together, these observations suggest quite simply that black workers stay at the bottom and find it precariously difficult to cling to the higher rungs of the earnings distribution. In other words, for blacks, success is at best ephemeral, while failure is almost a permanent condition.

Those blacks who did move up from the bottom of the distribution did not get nearly so far as their white counterparts, the difference amounting to 1.6 ventiles (eight percentiles). On the other hand, blacks who fell from the highest reaches of the distribution tumbled much farther than their white counterparts. These experiences are representative of the general pattern of black workers rising less and falling further.

A salient implication of these observations is that black workers failed to move up the earnings distribution during the period 1957-71. And this is in fact what happened: The average position of black workers remained virtually unchanged at approximately the 13th ventile. As noted earlier, this lack of upward mobility is particularly disturbing for the period observed, because it suggests that the civil rights and equal opportunity initiatives of the 1960's failed to improve the relative status of workers who were already in the labor market. Whether those efforts benefited blacks who *entered* the labor market after 1957 cannot be determined here, but the observed immobility provides a sobering perspective on the collective efforts to increase equality of opportunity and status across racial lines.

## The verdict on mobility

Our observations lead to two conclusions. First, the American economy is characterized by a very high degree of individual income mobility. Specifically, individuals move significant distances up and down the earnings distribution, implying tremendous mobility of relative economic status. The rigid shape of the aggregate income distribution is a misleading index of opportunity stratification because it camouflages a great deal of individual mobility between the separate points of that distribution. Opportunity is measured not only by the share of total income received by the richest 20 per cent (or any other group) but by the chances for individuals to move from lower status positions to the top 20 per cent (or any-

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where else). And on this basis the suggestion that the American economy is rigidly stratified can be rejected. The inequalities observed at any particular time are reduced over time as individuals exchange relative economic positions.

There are important exceptions to this generalization, however—the most important of which concerns blacks (and presumably some other minorities as well). Black workers are much less likely to move up the earnings distribution and more likely to fall once they do reach the top of the distribution. As a consequence, black workers who were in the labor force in 1957 have achieved virtually no gain in relative economic status since then, despite a flurry of legislative and judicial efforts on their behalf. Thus, for blacks, the inequalities observed at any moment tend to be permanent rather than transitory. The conclusion is that there continues to exist significant stratification of opportunities across racial lines.

Second, there is a pattern of reduced mobility at the extreme ends of the earnings distribution, an observation which further qualifies the general conclusion about pervasive opportunity. People at the top clearly have an easier time maintaining their status than others, while people at the bottom have a relatively difficult time moving up.

## The "good job"

With important qualifications, the general conclusion to be drawn is that income mobility is a fact of life in the American economy. It might be asked, though, how all this mobility comes about. How does a worker from the low end of the distribution actually get to the higher earnings position? Recall that all the relevant comparisons are based on the relative earnings of men who are approximately the same age. Thus, the number of years an individual has worked—the *quantity* of experience—cannot explain this mobility. Instead, it is the *quality* of experience that really counts. What this means in plain English is that the experience of individual workers varies according to several factors: the type of jobs they have had; the kinds of employers (firms and industries) they choose; the number of different jobs and employers they have had; and the amount of training they undertake.

Economists have been paying increased attention to this last element of experience—the amount of training undertaken after a worker becomes employed. Such training may take place in for-

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mal vocational schools, but is more likely to take place on the job. Workers *learn* skills on the job, and the quality and quantity of on-the-job training can materially change a worker's income potential. In general, it would be expected that those who undertake more training experience higher rates of promotion, thus rising higher in the earnings distribution. Conversely, those who undertake little on-the-job training will experience slower rates of earnings growth and thus lose relative status.

On-the-job training thus provides a more coherent explanation of earnings mobility than other elements of work experience.[3] It is difficult to say, for example, why the *number* of different jobs a person has had should raise or lower one's relative status unless we are willing to suggest that skill development is somehow related to job-jumping. Likewise, the most important feature of an employer—either a firm or an industry—may be the number and quality of skill development opportunities it provides.

Although the general impact of training can be described, it is not altogether clear what determines the availability of on-the-job training opportunities, or how workers avail themselves of such opportunities. In many instances a formally structured training course is established by the employer and made available to all employees, or to a select group of them. Programmed management development curricula are one example of such on-the-job training opportunities, and successful "graduates" typically experience unusually high rates of earnings growth. More frequently, on-the-job training is provided in a decidedly informal structure, with skills being passed on from worker to worker. In this context, the amount of training offered is dependent on the size of the firm and the amount of interaction between workers of different skills, while the amount of training undertaken is largely an expression of individual motivation and ambition, and the capacity to learn.

If these suggestions about the nature and impact of on-the-job training are valid, they have important implications for our perspectives on equality and opportunity. To begin with, our concept of a "good job" might be defined more appropriately in terms of opportunities for on-the-job training than in the traditional, but static, terms of wages, hours, or other amenities. More generally, we might begin to see the availability of such "good jobs" as the critical mechanism for assuring equal opportunity.

[3] In a longer paper from which this article is drawn, I analyze in detail alternative models to explain the pattern of income mobility—among them, class discrimination, "dual-labor market" models, schooling investments—and conclude that the explanation presented here best fits the data.

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# Rawls, Nozick, and Educational Equality

JAMES S. COLEMAN

Two recent treatises on moral philosophy have attracted far more general attention than is ordinarily given to works in academic philosophy: *A Theory of Justice*, by John Rawls, and *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, by Robert Nozick. Together, they offer a framework for considering the difficult problems of inequality in education. Rawls' theory of justice directly addresses the question of what is a just distribution in society—or, put differently, whether inequalities are justified in society, and if so, what kinds and amounts of inequality. Rawls' answer is that only those inequalities are justified which are to the benefit of the least advantaged. Because some inequalities of position or of resources may bring greater productivity and thus greater benefits to all, they may be justified by this principle—though only those such inequalities are permissible.

Nozick's book is in part a response to Rawls. He points out that most inequalities are not created by some central authority, but arise because of individuals' innate or acquired differences in skills, capabilities, and other resources. Thus, he argues (correctly, I believe) that Rawls' principle presupposes that these resources and their products are collectively held, and that individuals have no rights to them. Nozick's own theory is diametrically opposed to this principle. Beginning with the assumption that each person has a set of natural rights, Nozick argues that justice demands neither equality nor an inequality that must benefit the least advantaged, but rather the full entitlement of each person to what he has justly acquired. Whereas for Rawls, a central authority is entitled to distribute the fruits of everyone's labor, for Nozick, only the individual is entitled to the fruits of his own labor, and he has full rights to the use and disposal of them.

Although these are merely the positions of two philosophers, they express both the principal argument for regarding equality as the only just distribution, and the principal argument for regarding inequalities as justified and equality as an artificially imposed state. The equality position begins with an imagery of a set of benefits held by a central authority; and the question is then raised: How shall these benefits be distributed? Isaiah Berlin has expressed well this position in his answer to that question:

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> . . . no reason need be given . . . for an equal distribution of benefits—for that is "natural"—self-evidently right and just, and needs no justification. . . . If I have a cake and there are 10 persons among whom I wish to divide it, then if I give exactly one tenth to each, this will not, at any rate automatically, call for justification; whereas if I depart from this principle of equal division I am expected to produce a special reason.

The inequality position begins with a very different imagery: a set of individuals each having produced certain goods through his own skills and efforts. The question is then asked: Who has the right to these goods? The answer is as self-evident as the answer to the parallel question raised by the equality position: Each has the right to the product of his labor until and unless he chooses to transfer some portion of it to another (or perhaps to a central authority for redistribution). According to this position, imposition of equality in benefits constitutes a significant loss of rights, not only for the "haves," but also for the "have nots" (for after redistribution, they must be restrained from market transactions that would destroy the pure equality and reinstate inequality).

Now what do these two positions imply for education? Rawls' position implies erasing all the "accidents of birth" which give one person more opportunity than another, and thus creating a full equalization of opportunity for each child. As political philosophers have long noted, this necessitates removing the child from all influences of his family—because families provide differential opportunity—and raising him as a ward of the state, subject to precisely the same conditions as any other child.[1]

Nozick's position implies, in contrast, no system of public education at all. For public education is redistributive, and by Nozick's "entitlement" principles each child is entitled to the full untaxed benefits of his family's resources, insofar as it chooses to use those resources for his benefit. Thus for Nozick, all education is private, paid for individually by each family according to its resources and preferences.

These are extreme positions; few persons would assent to the educational structure implied by either. And it is clear from the extreme educational structures they imply that neither position can be a correct expression of a just society. For if justice in society requires a Rawlsian solution, then justice must also bring many undesirable consequences in its wake. And if justice in society requires no more than a Nozickian solution, then the sins of the fathers are indeed visited on the sons, with no outside alleviating influence to mitigate the inheritance of advantage or disadvantage.

[1] There are passages in Rawls' book which indicate that he does not envision such a radical transformation of the child's environment. Nevertheless, such a transformation does follow quite directly from his position concerning permissible inequalities.

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Yet these two extreme positions are useful, because they show the different ends toward which each philosophical position points, and they sensitize us to what is gained or lost by moving in either direction. By moving in the direction of equality, we lose individual liberty to a central authority which imposes equality; and by moving in the direction of individual liberty, we lose equality to the accidents of birth reinforced by the market and the institution of private property.

The existence of the family is a negation of Rawls' position; the existence of the public school is a negation of Nozick's position. But the balance of power between the family and the school, and the balance of power among the forces that control the school, reflect the balance in society between these two positions. As the latter balance shifts, then there will be a shift in the relative power of family and school, and a shift in the character of the school itself. Before examining the principal issues of equality and liberty that have arisen in the schools, it is useful to examine some general processes that have changed American public education since its inception, processes that have implications for these issues.

Public education in America from the outset had two properties: It was locally financed and controlled, and it was egalitarian. Local communities set up, ran, and oversaw their own schools, with only slight aid, encouragement, or interference from the state, and none from the federal government. But because this country had no remnants of the hierarchical feudal society which spawned a two-tier public school system in Europe, but had instead an egalitarian ethic, the public schools were *common* schools—one school for children from all walks of life. To be sure, there were private schools used by some, particularly in the less egalitarian East, but as the public school movement grew, the single, common public school became the overwhelmingly dominant institution in American education. The schools showed some homogeneity, because different communities and, in the cities, different neighborhoods had different populations. Yet, in general, the banker's son and the laborer's son went to the same school, because their fathers lived and worked in the same community. (The dual school system of the South was an aberration, a persistent residue of slavery.) I don't mean to imply that the "common school" was highly egalitarian in practice: The very social diversity of its population led to practices within it designed to preserve the advantages of some and to reproduce, without too much reshuffling, the social structure of the preceding generation. Yet the school remained a common school, in which children from all social levels mixed—and in the smaller communities of that early period, social levels were not as far apart in social style as they are today. If a family was strongly opposed to anything about a child's school, but without the money for private school, it could move to satisfy its educational tastes; or in some cities with optional attendance zones or city-wide schools, it could choose another school without changing residence. But these choices were

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highly constrained, because limitation in transportation kept residence, workplace, and school physically close.

However, in more recent years, particularly since World War II, several developments have greatly altered the patterns of the early public schools. One is the great growth of metropolitan areas and the concomitant decline of the independent small town. For the first time, most American children were attending school in a city of some size or the suburbs surrounding it. Parallel with this was the growth of a remarkably flexible and adaptable transportation system based on the automobile. These two changes, together with a general increase in affluence for all—and thus a greater range of economic options—made possible the separation of workplace from residence, and the development of large socially homogeneous residential areas served by socially homogeneous schools. In principle, the possibilities of choosing a school by choosing residence had not changed; but in practice, the possibilities had expanded greatly, as residence anywhere in the metropolitan area became a practical possibility for many persons in many cities. The result was a much greater social homogeneity of the population within each school, and an erosion of the egalitarian principle that underlay the common school. These possibilities coincided with the large-scale movement of blacks to large cities in the South and particularly in the North. This accelerated the residential homogenization and the choice of school by choice of residence.

At the same time, there were more subtle changes taking place in the control and financing of schools. School districts became larger and more removed from the effective control of parents in the community. State governments substantially increased their financing of schools and began to exercise more control over school policy and operations; and in 1965 the federal government began for the first time to add to general school finances—and with this financial wedge gained the possibility of some control. At present, over the country as a whole, just about half of school finances are provided by state and federal funds: about 41 per cent provided from state governments and about nine per cent from the federal government.

Thus at the same time that schools were homogenizing—increasing the separation of social classes and races through residential choice—the localism of school control was giving way to large districts and a financial structure appropriate for the exercise of state and federal power. What had happened was two movements in opposing directions: on the one hand, a movement toward greater local differentiation and greater social homogeneity of individual schools; and on the other hand, a movement away from local finance and control of schools and toward increasingly centralized finance and control. The first movement was a movement away from the egalitarian principle of the common school; the second was a movement that placed more power in centralized hands that could

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attempt to reinstate the egalitarian principle, or to impose new, even more stringent, egalitarian measures.

The impasse to which these two movements have led is the impasse that currently confronts schools. There has been an increased exercise of residential choice of school, a right which most persons regard as a natural right (in Nozick's sense), and at the same time attempts by governmental agencies at the district, state, and federal levels to impose equality of opportunity through restriction or withdrawal of this right. There are two major issues in education where this impasse has occurred: school finance and school desegregation.

THE most direct clash of the two principles of liberty and equality has occurred over the imposition of compulsory busing within school districts; and an even more intense clash appears ahead with the possibility of compulsory busing across school district lines within a metropolitan area. I am not discussing here school desegregation that rectifies the discriminatory actions of school boards and school administrations. But by definition, nearly all busing seeks to rectify that school segregation which arises from residential segregation—that is, from individual choice. By compulsory busing I mean the assignment of children by a central authority to schools at some distance from their homes to insure that all schools have a similar racial composition.

It is useful to pause for a moment and ask just how the issue of compulsory busing relates to the positions of Rawls and Nozick regarding equality versus liberty. Compulsory busing of children within a jurisdiction involves two ideas: first, that different children, because of their differing backgrounds, constitute resources for the learning of other children; and second, that a central authority has the right to redistribute such "resources" equally among all children. Opposition to compulsory busing accepts the first idea, but rejects the second: If there is to be redistribution, opponents of busing hold that this is a matter to be left up to individual parents who, through their choice of residence, decide where their children go to school. The advocates of compulsory busing (whether within the city, within the metropolitan area, or within some differently defined jurisdiction) subscribe to the premise underlying the arguments for equality: Resources or benefits are under the legitimate control of a central authority, not of individuals. Opponents subscribe to the premise underlying the arguments for liberty and against equality: Resources or benefits are under the legitimate control of the individuals who generate them (the family—or at a later age, the children themselves), not of a central authority.

Much can be said against both positions. The first is obviously a violation of individual rights as they have existed in this country. The second is blind to one fact: Exercise of individual rights under reduced external constraints (i.e., reduced constraints on contiguity of workplace and home) can lead to great increases in inequality. When the physical constraints that ensured the diversity of the

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common school in early days no longer exist, the result is social homogeneity within the school and social diversity between schools. In this situation, there are two obvious policy alternatives, and a third that is not so obvious:

1. Withdrawing individual rights, vesting them in a central authority which can assign children from different backgrounds in equal measures to all schools. This option attaches total value to equality, and is indifferent to any loss of liberty that may result.

2. Retaining the individual rights of families and children to the choice of school by choice of residence. This option attaches total value to individual liberty, and is indifferent to whatever inequality may result.

3. Rather than withdrawing rights from those who have the (economic) power to exercise them effectively, enlarging the rights of others. This is a less obvious alternative to both positions that provides a set of "countervailing rights" which when exercised will increase equality rather than inequality. In the case of busing, this alternative would be to provide any child in a metropolitan area the right to transfer to a school of his choice, so long as the receiving school has a smaller proportion of his race than the school he leaves. The school would be required to accept children from outside its attendance zone, up to its capacity (which would be arbitrarily defined as a fixed percentage of the student body). Thus the right to choose school by residence remains; but in addition, the right is added to choose a school even if a family is otherwise effectively excluded, by economics or by race, from the residential area of that school—a right that when exercised reduces inequality. By this alternative full equality is not realized, nor is the full liberty of the economically advantaged to maintain homogeneous schools realized. But neither is equality fully sacrificed for that liberty, nor is liberty fully sacrificed for equality. And in addition, a new liberty or right is provided for those previously without it. (I should mention that I am not the first to suggest this alternative. Congressman Richardson Preyer has introduced in Congress a "National Educational Opportunities Act" affirming this principle.)

If the addition of this right did not create desegregation to the degree desired by the community (that is, if the community regards a greater degree of desegregation as a public good), then the proper solution according to this alternative would not be to remove liberty by coercive reassignment of children to achieve racial balance. The costs of this public good should be borne, instead, by the same group that demanded the greater degree of desegregation—that is, the community as a whole. Schools that are less integrated than desired could only use inducements to obtain a more heterogeneous student body. The most obvious inducement would be a direct payment from public funds to the family of any child whose enrollment would make the school more heterogeneous. Thus the liberty to attend the school of one's choice remains, and a degree of equality is realized at the expense of a tax on the community as a whole.

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THE second area of impasse between the two movements—toward social homogeneity of schools, and away from local finance and control—is equity in school finance. So long as schooling was locally financed from the relatively self-contained economies of independent towns and cities, few problems of equity arose among school districts. As with Nozick's position concerning individual liberty, each school district was regarded as entitled to its own resources, locally generated and locally held, whatever inequalities may have resulted. But the situation has changed, in part, to resemble that presupposed by the Rawlsian imagery: Half the school resources are now collected by a central authority (the state or federal government) and redistributed to local levels. In such a circumstance, the presuppositions behind the notion of equality in financing are met—for at least half the finances—and Berlin's or Rawls' arguments for equality become persuasive. In this case, the issue of liberty versus equality is a little different: It is the liberty not of the individual, but of the local school district, to use freely its own resources for its own schools. And it is the equality, or equity, not among individuals but among districts, which opposes this district-level liberty.

This issue has arisen in several court cases in which the plaintiffs demanded equal financing by the state, or at least financing in which the level of expenditure is made independent of the wealth of the district. The plaintiffs lost in the Supreme Court, but the issue remains alive, in state courts and legislatures.

The principle in this case seems less in dispute than in the case of school segregation: Individual rights to keep one's own resources for the schooling of one's own children have been voluntarily surrendered long ago by votes to impose taxes for public schooling. So school resources are now, and have been, collected and redistributed from a central authority. The only point at issue is the *size* of the unit within which equal expenditures are to occur: Is it the local school district, the state, or even the nation as a whole? Equal expenditures at the last of these levels, the national level, are not currently an issue, probably because of the small fraction of total school expenditures that are federally financed. It is between the other two levels that the issue lies.

As in the issue of school segregation, there exist two obvious alternatives, and a third that is not so obvious:

1. Expanding the equality position, providing full state funding. This forecloses the liberty of individual districts to spend more on education by taxing themselves more heavily, and its does so to insure full equality of financing for all children in the state. (The issue is made more complex by the different costs of education in different localities of a state, but I will ignore these complexities here.)

2. Maintaining the position of liberty for local communities by maintaining local taxation and local decision-making about the level of expenditure. State supplementation occurs as at present, but

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with no attempt to constrain expenditures of local districts in the name of equality. This position ignores the principle of equality throughout the state, except in a secondary way through state supplementation, in order to preserve the liberty of individual districts to use their taxes as they see fit for education.

3. Neither maintaining the full liberty of local control nor wholly discarding it in favor of equity. This alternative to both positions would be to permit each district to determine its own *rate* of taxation, based on the desired level of expenditure for education; but the taxable wealth is in effect equalized throughout the state, so that two districts which vote the same tax *rate* will raise the same educational *revenues* per pupil, though one district may contain little taxable property and the other much. This proposal has been made by others, and I merely restate it here (John Coons, William Clune, and Stephen Sugarman, *Private Wealth and Public Education*, Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1970). This alternative, like the third alternative in the issue of school segregation, does not achieve full equality, nor does it sacrifice full liberty. It gives each district in effect the same wealth, and then allows the district the liberty of determining its tax rate for education.

* * *

It is not often that theoretical statements in disciplines as arcane as academic moral philosophy are directly relevant to issues of social policy, or are in such sharp opposition on these issues. But the recent theoretical statements by John Rawls and Robert Nozick are both relevant and incompatible concerning the two central issues of current educational policy, and they illuminate the moral or philosophical bases on which the opposing policy positions are grounded. The benefit of drawing out the policy implications of these philosophical theories lies not in any greater persuasiveness lent to the respective policies; on neither issue does the policy position that I personally favor (the third alternative on both issues) follow from either Rawls' or Nozick's theory. Rather, the benefit lies in showing the inherent conflicts in educational policy between equality (which Rawls elevates to supremacy) and liberty (which is supreme for Nozick). And the connection in moral theory between the conception of centrally held resources and a principle of equality (evident in the work of both Berlin and Rawls) suggests the social conditions under which the principle of equality will gain greater or lesser ascendancy. In addition, the fact that for certain policies (such as school desegregation) children themselves are regarded as resources implies that however centralized the financial resources of the schools are, these human resources—not centrally held, but rather products of individual families—will offset the centrally held resources, thus providing the context in which natural rights theories (like that of Nozick) are persuasive.

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